

和ヶ原聡司

イラスト 029

Satoshi Waghara
Illustration Oniku

5.5



魔王城文庫

CONTENTS

序章

P002

魔王、就農す

P011

勇者、伝説となる

P069

魔王と勇者、
佐々木家を守るために立ち上がる

P169

終章

P258



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はなとらとて 薙に ぞ

Prologue

On a certain night, the television in the living room was currently broadcasting a trivia competition programme which became popular recently.

The three members of the Sasaki family were gathered in the living room.

Even though they were gathered together, the things they were doing were completely different.

Sasaki Chiho was fiddling with her phone with one hand and distractedly glancing at the television. Her father, Senichi, was lying on the couch and sleeping.

Her mother, Riho, was reading the newspaper as well as...

“Yoshida Tōyō.”

“Hemmed seam.”

“Pachycephalosaurus.”

Rapidly answering the questions of the programme that Chiho was watching. Meanwhile, Chiho kept looking at her mother with a surprised expression.

After having dinner, what was left was to sleep and rest so the body would have enough energy to deal with the activities of tomorrow.

This was an extremely normal scene in a Japanese family.

Coincidentally, right after the show ended, the Sasaki family received a call.

Riho, who reacted immediately, quickly stood up to get the phone.

Just out of the corner of Chiho's eye, Chiho noticed her father flipping over due to the noise from the phone.

“Hello...oh, it's older brother! It's been a while!”

As her mother suddenly went from using a polite tone to a casually cheerful one, Chiho unconsciously looked at her mother's profile.

Since her mother shouted “older brother”, that would mean...

“Alright, Senichi drank some beer and laid on the sofa and fell asleep. I'll go wake him up.”

Riho mercilessly finished her words and used her chin to signal Chiho to wake her father up.

“Dad, Dad, there’s a call for you.”

Chiho obeyed her mother’s request and started patting her father’s shoulder.

“Uh...hmm...ehhn?”

“Dad! Uncle called! Okay, quickly get up!”

“Hrnm...A call from Aniki? Hm.....okay.”

Senichi lazily got up from the couch, stretched and then took the phone.

“Hello?”

He received the phone, his voice still tinged with some fatigue.

“It’s really rare for your uncle from Nagano to call at this time.”

Sasaki Manji was Chiho’s father’s older brother so to Chiho, he was her paternal uncle.

Chiho’s father’s ancestral home was located in Nagano and Manji inherited the family’s agricultural land.

The job of a farmer usually involved waking up early and once it was past nine, everyone would have gone to bed. To be able to call at this time was a very rare matter.

“Hm.....just take it slow, if my job becomes any busier, it’s gonna be tough on me.”

The father’s words had an accent that would not be heard in Tokyo.

While talking to people from his old home, the father will use Japanese from the place he grew up in.

“Yeah, that so.....Wha!? Mom is?!”

Suddenly, the father’s tone became anxious.

Chiho and Riho both looked up, also worried.

Her father’s “mom” was, to Chiho, her paternal grandmother.

Because her father was not acting like his usual self, the entire Sasaki family was extremely uneasy.

“Yeah...Oh.....Ah?.....Oh.....So that’s how it was.”

But very quickly, her father’s voice sounded more relaxed and the tension that Chiho was feeling started to slowly dissipate.

And like that, he chatted on the phone for a while.

“I really do want to go back you know, but it’s not that easy.....No, I really want to go back to help. But if I go back now, it’s a bit.....oh, ok, yeah, probably. Don’t get your hopes up. Right, you might as well help me tell mom to get well soon, ‘kay? Alright, alright, see ya.”

And Chiho’s father hung up the phone, seemingly fatigued.

“What is it? Did something happen to mom?”

Before Chiho’s father even caught his breath, her mother quickly enquired about the situation.

“Yeah, well, it’s not that serious.”

Chiho’s father shook his head and sat down on the couch with a thump.

“It seems that mom got herself injured by a wild boar while she’s out in the fields.”

“”What?!””

This shocked both Chiho and Riho.

“Gran, granny is alright isn’t she?”

Chiho poked her head out from behind the couch while her father placed an arm around her.

(T/N: Actually the translation was very weird but I suppose it’s something like this.)

“In case it was something more serious, she got sent to the doctor to be checked. There’s nothing life threatening but since she’s old, she had to stay in the hospital for observation.”

Chiho’s father’s tone still carried some of the accent he used when he was having the phone call and Chiho did not know whether to be relieved or to be worried.

“But the important thing is what Aniki said later on.”

As though Chiho’s father felt very troubled from the bottom of his heart, he held his forehead with his hand.

“The workers ran away so he asked me if I could help out in harvesting the crops.....”

“Eh?”

Both mother and daughter tilted their heads at the same time to show their lack of understanding of the situation.

“You both should know right? From Aniki’s generation onwards, he started a Farmers’ Corporation and hired interns from the agricultural school.”

After Chiho listened to that sentence, she started to recall the time when she was younger and went to her father’s old home to play.

Her uncle Manji said the following to her:

“Oh, Chiho, I’ve become a director!”

Even though she was already a high school student, she did not really understand the system in a “Corporation”. Basically, it allowed the Sasaki’s family business to be operated like a company and it generally increased income.

“Ran away? You mean the employees ran away? That’s really irresponsible of them!”

“No, if you really want me to say it, the situation is actually very complicated.....”

Chiho’s father started out by saying “Even though I’m not very sure of the situation” and then explained the situation in the Sasaki household.

The Sasaki family was currently responsible for the country’s and municipal agricultural plan for young people.

It was a policy that gathered young people that aim to work in agriculture in order to increase the population of people involved in agriculture.

This year, the Sasaki household just happened to get selected among the many participating agricultural groups in the same district to cooperate with the government’s policy.

Therefore, they hired a few agricultural interns who got introduced by a few municipals.

As most of the interns do not have much experience, it is impossible to let them carry out any tasks that were too difficult. However, not only do they receive monetary compensation, it also saves them the trouble of hiring part timers. So to these agricultural families, there are many advantages.

Therefore, for the summer's harvesting period, the Sasaki family cancelled the plans to gather part timers and intended to make use of the interns to tide over the most hectic period.

Though it was planned to be as such...

“Those fellows sure chose a great time to run.”

These young people do, of course, have some passion for agriculture.

Truthfully speaking, the last time the Sasaki family hired these agricultural interns, though those young people were not very familiar with the operations, they were very enthusiastic. Furthermore, when the internship period ended, there was one person who went to establish his own farm at another municipal.

However, this time, the people hired were those who “only saw the interesting side of farming”.

Firstly, there are no rest days in agricultural work. Though there are some days where work will be more and some days where there will be less, it is basic knowledge that there were no holidays.

As the Sasaki family were following the structure of a corporation, they will give their workers fixed rest days. However, the rest days might be taken away according the weather conditions or the condition of the farm.

Furthermore, for people who are not used to the laborious activity that pushed the body to the limit for the whole day, they will feel wailing of the entire body's muscles and joints the following day.

Being scorched by the sun's vicious rays, muscle pains, the body getting dirtied by soil and dust, the stench of unseen insects, frogs and droppings from various farm fowl mixed together, all defeated the interns one by one.

The final straw was the disturbance from the wild boar.

The interns who developed a fear of wild animals after Chiho's grandmother was injured all left.

The interns disappearing on a whim caused the Sasaki family some trouble.

In the policy, if the workers did not work according to the plan, then there is compensation through grants and reimbursements. But if no one helped with the harvesting, then the crops which took a lot of work and effort to grow these crops will come to naught.

To see their own crops destroyed by their own hands was something that farmers were unable to tolerate the most.

But even if they quickly put up notices to recruit people, all those young people with both experience and passion would have long been hired by other people.

As the harvesting date was closing in and the grandmother who was a part of the valuable fighting force was injured, it can be said that the Sasaki family were being forced into a dead end.

Therefore, they wanted to call back Senichi who had been independently living in Tokyo.

“And I already have plans for the Obon holiday.....”

Chiho’s father wrapped his arms around his head.

As her father was a police officer, his holidays do not follow the usual ones in the calendar. Obon or New Years was one thing but there was no way he could take a few days off to help with farming.

“Even if I go back, I can’t do much.....Though I can visit mom in the hospital, but working in the fields is.....”

Chiho’s mother also had a bitter look on her face.

“It’s alright if I go.”

Chiho said without thinking.

It was not as though Chiho had no experience at all, but the most she did was help to select sellable looking crops when she returned to the family home when she was younger.

“Now the shop is undergoing renovation so there’s no need to work, I’m also almost done with my school’s homework. And since it’s the summer holidays, club activities have also.....”

“Even though I’m very thankful for your intentions, if Chiho went by herself, Aniki and Aneki will be even more worried. And it’s really troublesome around this time, it’s better if some males could go over.....”

Even though the things Senichi was worried about would be settled eventually after some time, this was still a crisis involving his old home. There was no way he would not be worried.

“Males huh.....”

Riho repeated Senichi’s words under her breath and then cross her arms over her chest, thinking.

“Ah, that’s it.”

She suddenly clapped her hands and looked towards Chiho.

“Your work place is currently undergoing renovation, right?”

“Uu? Yeah.”

The place where Chiho was working part time was a world famous fast food restaurant, MgRonalds, the branch in front of Hatagaya station was currently temporarily closed for the sake of bringing in the new MgCafe concept.

“Meaning, he should be quite free right?”

Who is free? Chiho did not specially intend to ask that question.

Because she already knew what her mother was thinking about.

Chiho’s eyes widened and as though her mother was able to see through the wavering in her heart, the ends of her mouth curled upwards and she asked with an interested tone:

“Why don’t you ask Maou-san and the rest? They shouldn’t be working now right?”

Chapter 1: The Demon King, Farming

魔王、就農す



Under the clear sky that can be seen for miles, Sasaki Riho was driving on the expressway towards her destination.

Even though it was the summer holidays, as the Obon festival holiday just ended, the traffic was very smooth and they reached Lake Suwa service area without a hitch.

“So, let’s rest here for a bit first. Urushihara-san looks like he has reached his limit.”

Riho parked the car and gave a troubled smile while looking towards the back seat.

“Oi, Urushihara, are you still alive?”

“Ye...yeah, ugh.”

In the middle of the back seat, the small sized youth, Urushihara, was looking very pale and seemed to be breathless. On his right was a black haired youth, Maou Sadao who had not put down the sick bag in his hand since the start of the journey just in case.

“Urushihara-san, if you need the washroom, it should be that side.”

Chiho who was sitting next to Urushihara, quickly opened the car door to let Urushihara come into contact with fresh air. After that, she held onto Urushihara who was climbing out of the car.

“How pathetic.....Sasaki-san, I apologise for the fact that you have to take care of this useless person.”

The tall person who said such mean words--Ashiya Shiro stepped out from the front passenger's seat.

“Urushihara, stand properly. Don't give Sasaki-san so much trouble. Really, you weren't like this on the car in Choshi right?”

“D, don't shake me. Ugh.”

After Ashiya supported Urushihara, who was as white as a sheet, he dragged him towards the toilet.

Looking at their backs, Maou faced Riho and bowed his head.

“Sorry for that, that guy is too useless.”

“It's alright. Chiho also got motion sickness really easily when she was younger. When she had to go for a school trip in elementary school, she cried because she didn't dare to take the bus.”

“Mo, mom! You don’t have to say such unnecessary things right?!”

In an unexpected situation, Chiho’s insignificant and embarrassing past was revealed and her entire face turned red.

“Then, since it’s already noon, I heard that it’s very easy to get motion sickness when you’re hungry! Maou-san is hungry too right? Let’s go grab a bite!”

After Riho locked the car door, she lead the way towards the building belonging to the service area.

“But, is Urushihara-san really okay?”

Looking at Ashiya and Urushihara’s backs, Chiho asked, worried.

The car at Chiho’s home was a normal five seater family car. Ashiya who was tall was seated next to the driver’s seat while Maou and Chiho were seated in the back passenger seats next to the windows; between the two was Urushihara.

Even though the positioning was as such because there was not much of a choice, but in some ways, this position looked like the kind where the atmosphere had not been read at all.

(T/N: Chinese translation made no sense. Checked Japanese text, seemed to be something like that. In other words, Urushihara, you got in the way of Chiho being close to Maou. Then again, why couldn't Chiho just sit in the middle...it's not as though she's taller than Urushihara. Middle seat is the most uncomfortable seat :<.)

And because of this positioning, Urushihara's motion sickness became even more severe.

(T/N: Actually according to theory, the middle back seat is the seat which is least likely to cause motion sickness other than the front seat because of an unobstructed view of the area in front. But it really differs from person to person.)

“Yeah.....I really found out several things this summer, like demons getting heat stroke and motion sickness.”

Maou shrugged his shoulders and gave a bitter smile.

“But he's so agile when flying through the air.....”

“Sitting in someone else's car and for so long is different from flying. When we went Choshi and took the car, it was only a ten minute ride, right? It's alright, he will recover on his own if you leave him alone. Shall we go in then? It's not good to let Auntie wait.”

The two of them followed Riho's footsteps into the building.

It was very lively in the large and wide building and there were tourists everywhere. Whether it was souvenir stalls or the food court, it seemed extremely grand.

"Come here, both of you, hurry, hurry!"

Chiho raised her head after hearing Riho's voice and saw that Riho had very skillfully found seats for five people next to the windows.

"This is the first time I came to an expressway service station. This place is quite big."

Maou sat in the seat opposite of Riho.

As for Chiho, after some hesitation, she still decided to sit in the seat next to her mother's.

"This place used to be the largest service area you know? But after other areas started renovating one after another, this place is no longer as outstanding. However, the scenery here is still the most beautiful."

Riho said and then looked out of the window, smiling.

The clear blue sky seemed to be cut apart by the undisturbed lake and the whole of Lake Suwa's scenery was in full view.

“If there's time, I would like to go to the onsen but since they are waiting for us..... If there's still time after we come back, how about going to the onsen?”

“Onsen?”

Maou tilted his head because that noun did not seem to match the image of an expressway.

Then Riho pointed towards the sign that was located at the corner of the pedestrian walkway.

“What?! There's an onsen here?!”

In one corner of the of the service area also had the words “Expressway Onsen Lake Suwa”.

“Well, it's just a normal onsen. I wonder if it just became a mere conversation topic. Ah, both of you! We're over here!”

Ashiya and Urushihara, who seemed to have regained some of his color, walked over and sat down. Everyone was present.

“Then let’s order the food in order then. Maou-san, you guys can go first.”

“Thanks. Oi, Urushihara, what do you want to eat?”

“.....Kake Udon.”

Even though there was some color to his face, Urushihara had yet to recover from his state of motion sickness and ordered a plain udon. After that, he put his head on the table.

“Chiho, this one.”

“Hm?.....Ah, ok, got it.”

During Chiho and Riho’s short exchange, Maou and Ashiya have ordered a Curry Pork Cutlet and a Shoyu Ramen, both popular dishes.

Then for some reason, Chiho glanced at the two and then went towards a direction away from the food court.

“Hm?”

“Ah.....”

Chiho waited till Maou and Ashiya returned to their seats and then placed something that looked like a bun onto their plates.

“Chi-chan, what’s this?”

“This is Nagano’s specialty product, Oyaki.”

The vegetable filled pastry’s crust was made by mixing wheat and buckwheat flour together and kneading them. The filling was made using wild vegetables, vegetables and meat. It was a food that looked a lot like a Chinese steamed bun.

“Mom said, even though you guys are here for work, since this is a place you won’t normally go to after all, you might as well try some local specialty foods. Oh right, the filling is the standard Nozawana!”

Looking at the vegetable bun that was slightly smaller than their palms, Maou and Ashiya exchanged glances.

“The, then.....”

“We’re digging in.”

And after saying that, they pulled out a chunk from the vegetable bun that looked like it was fresh from the oven and took a bite.

““It’s delicious.....””

Even though it looked like an ordinary bun, but the thin crust was very chewy and it matched the Nozawana in the filling very well.

“Hey, Urushihara, quick, try some of this! It’s really good!”

“Ah.....un, maybe later.....”

Maou who finished the entire thing at one go recommended it to Urushihara, but it seemed like Urushihara had not fully recovered.

“Then, since we are full now, it would be a waste if it gets thrown up immediately. Anyway, it’s alright as long as we reach before evening, there’s still plenty of time. I’ll go buy some things as well.”

After Riho stood up, Chiho followed suit.

Looking at the back of the mother and daughter duo, Maou gave Ashiya a look.

“Really--when the land changes, the food will change as well.”

“I agree, since we are in the mountains now, the food fare is different from Choshi’s. I’m really curious what kind of ingredients they have here.”

The new workplace they went to because of MgRonald’s current renovation, Ooguro’s beach house, was closed down due to unexpected circumstances.

And after they came back, they bought a large home appliance, namely a television.

Even though the Demon Fortress’s finances was not low to the point that it was distressing, it cannot be considered ample either.

Therefore, they decided to go to the hometown of Chiho’s father to help with farming duties.

Even though the salary was a bit lower than MgRonalds, the other party had paid for the room rental and food fees, so Maou and the others came over without giving much thought about it.

“Somehow.....it feels like only bad things occur once we’re out of the door.”

Urushihara mumbled while still having his head on the table. But in the hustle and bustle of the food court, no one could hear his voice.

※

Basically, the things happening around the Demon Fortress during early August was very messy.

The usual source of income for the Demon Fortress' master, Demon King Satan, also Maou Sadao, the branch of MgRonalDs in front of Hatagaya station, was temporarily closed due to renovation works.

Therefore, as the landlady of the six tatami apartment, Villa Rosa Sasazuka, which made up the Demon Fortress, Shiba Miki decided to see if Maou and group had any interest in working and staying at her relative's beach house.

Maou and the others, who were residents from a different world, excitedly headed for their workplace but encountered an unexplainable and unusual incident, and therefore had to head back home earlier than expected.

Not only did the incident had no negative impact on their income, they even earned more salary than usual. And they were finally able to buy the television which they were unable to afford.

But soon after the television was moved into the Demon Fortress, Sasaki Chiho who was the only person in Japan who knew about the true identity of Maou and the rest, received an injury which required her to be hospitalised.

The Demon King's, that is Maou's archnemesis, the Hero Emilia who was currently working at the call centre of the Docodemo mobile phone company--Yusa Emi; the Ente Isla inquisitor Crestia Bell, who was currently living in the room next to the Demon Fortress--Kamazuki Suzuno. Together with the both of them, they solved a series of events.

After that, since the time of ruling the Demon World, invading Ente Isla and then the huge disturbance of drifting to Japan, for the first time, Maou expressed that he really needed to take a break.

Not only can he protect his own people, he can guarantee Chiho's safety in Japan.

For Maou who had not had any proper rest for a hundred years, either went to the library to browse or watched a bit of television. He also played with Alas=Ramus, who occasionally came to visit with Yusa Emi. She treated both of them as her parents and was merged with the Evolving Holy Sword, One Wing. He had completely entered the mode of a father who had a long holiday.

To see the Demon King who was planning to conquer the world behave so sloppily, Emi and Suzuno, who have treated him as the world's enemy could not help but express their complicated feelings.

But, even if that thing was said, could it really stay as such? For the demons in the Demon Fortress, sooner or later, they will not be able to run away from the fate of working.

“Like I thought, it’s hard to feel motivated when you’re idling at home!”

Maou said as such.

Urushihara, who was satisfied with being a NEET every day and maintained a principle of “If I don’t have to go out, I won’t go out”, frowned upon hearing that.

Even so, since Maou, who was the Demon Fortress’ sole breadwinner, and Demon General Alsiel, who controlled all the home’s finances, agreed to the proposition, Urushihara naturally had no right to refuse.

It was already the end of August, after the Obon festival, when the demon trio decided to head to Chiho’s old home to help with farming work.

※

The car moving from Lake Suwa Service Area to the destination continued going forward in a straight line.

As they had a brief rest, Urushihara fortunately did not lose consciousness and the road condition was considered quite good.

The journey was extremely smooth.

“If we continue on like this, I suppose we’ll get there in less than an hour.”

Riho muttered, then Ashiya lifted his head and asked,

“We’re going to impose on Sasaki’s old home later on...May I know where is its exact location?”

“Oh my, Chiho, didn’t you explain properly? Sorry about that.”

“No, it’s not that. Even though we heard about it, in the end we’re not familiar with the details of this place.....”

Ashiya frantically shook his head as he could see from the mirror that Chiho was puffing up her cheeks from her mother’s joke.

“Hm--- Actually I’m not very sure about the geography around my in-laws home either.”

Riho made a disclaimer first.

“Basically, I do not think that there is any other place with more beautiful mountains than this.”

“Mountains?”

“You really can feel the existence of the ‘mountain range’.”

Following her mother’s statement, Chiho said this with zeal.

“Mountain climbing is really fun here. Not only that, you might be able to see some amazing mountain scenery here. However, if you look out from your father’s old home, you can see the Southern Japanese Alps. They are really beautiful. The water is also very clear and sweet and there’s a cool breeze even in the summer. It’s cool enough to the point that you don’t even need air-conditioning.”

(T/N: The Alps of Japan are made up of the following mountain ranges in central Japan, Hida Mountains, Kiso Mountains and Akaishi mountains.)

“It’s good that it’s going to be cool. After all, once we’re there, we probably have to do various kinds of laborious work.”

Chiho said things that made Maou smile broadly, however.....

“If it was last time--It was indeed like this--but now...”

Riho refuted Chiho’s statement in a persuasive manner.

“When Chiho was younger, this place definitely did give people the feeling that it was a cool place to escape the summer’s heat. But now, it seems like it’s not much different from Tokyo? Anyway, since you are going to be doing physical labour, it’s better if you just rehydrate yourself properly--”

“Uu.....”

The groan that Urushihara let out in the back seat was definitely not due to his motion sickness coming back.

“Also, after we leave the expressway, you can see a part of the Tenryu River. Ah, oh dear, oh dear, we’re almost there already.”

Riho suddenly looked towards the road signs and frantically decelerated, shifting the car to the left lane.

“Urushihara-san! There will be a large turn later!”

“Okay~.....”

Following Riho’s voice, the car also turned towards the expressway’s exit.

About three hours have passed since they left Tokyo till now.

The car the three demons were riding on went through the Central Expressway's Komagane junction and reached Nagano prefecture's Komagane city.

“Even though it's a bit late to ask now, is it really alright to not inform Yusa-san about this beforehand?”

As the car weaved through the ETC road and turned left towards the city district, Chiho looked as though she just thought of something and asked Maou.

“I guess she won't get angry when we go back?”

“Quite likely she would get angry but there's no need to let that person know where we are going right?”

Superficially, Emi who originally came from Ente Isla to fight against Maou, would naturally want to have complete knowledge of their movements.

“Besides, we might even get scolded by her before even getting back.”

Chiho tilted her head to express that she did not understand while Maou looked extremely annoyed and sighed.

Just as the car passed the City centre, the JR Komagane station could be seen through the windshield.

“Before coming here, I checked. There is a direct bus here from Shinjuku.”

“What.....ah!”

As though to answer Chiho’s question, they happened to pass the bus stop in front of Komagane station.

“Even though I didn’t tell Emi anything, Suzuno also heard Chi-chan’s words at that time right?”

“.....yeah.”

Chiho nodded her head in agreement.

Without mistake, when Chiho went to Maou’s apartment to ask if they are willing to go to the Sasaki home to work, Suzuno came from the neighbouring room, looking very interested.

“When we were at Choshi, didn’t they chase after us as well? There is no way those two won’t come this time.”

“.....That seems to be so~”

Chiho was completely unable to find any reason to rebuke Maou's words.

※

“Ah-Choo!....Ah uu”

“Oh my, Alas=Ramus, are you ok?”

Emi pulled out a piece of tissue paper from the side of her backpack and wiped the mucus from the nose of her ‘daughter’ who sneezed.

“Is the air-conditioning too cold.....But it's really hot outside. Maybe we should just sit around in some restaurant before leaving?”

Emi said as she was comparing the time displayed on her watch and the bus timing on the electronic schedule.

Emi and Alas=Ramus were in front of Shinjuku West Exit's bus ticket counter which was in front Yodokawabashi electronic shop, looking at the bus schedule for the bus heading towards the southern part of Nagano Prefecture--Iida line.

“Emilia, sorry for making you wait.”

A petite lady wearing a kimono was running towards them.

And in her hand was something that looked like a long envelope.

“It wasn’t easy getting the tickets. Even though Obon festival is already over, the seats are almost all sold out. We can take the Keio bus towards Komagane station an hour later.”

“Thank you Bell. These days, even if it’s the Obon festival, most people are still taking turns to take off days. How much are the tickets?”

Emi thanked Suzuno who helped her queue for tickets and took her wallet out.

“Wait, it is indeed over three thousand yen but as there’s quite a bit of change, we can discuss this later.”

Suzuno showed Emi the luggage she had in her hands and passed the ticket over.

“How about Alas=Ramus? Is it half-price?”

“No, if the mother keeps the child on her lap, for Alas=Ramus’s age, there is no need for a ticket. There’s some situation on the road so the journey would take about four hours. Is it alright?”

When bringing a baby to take any form of public transport for a long period of time, Emi was worried if she would affect other passengers.

Even though Alas=Ramus does not suddenly throw a tantrum and start fussing and crying, whether she was able to obediently sit in a vehicle for up to four hours was a significant problem.

“I think it wouldn’t be an issue as long as I let her look out of the window.....Bell, is it alright if you let me and Alas=Ramus take the window seat?”

“It’s alright. But taking the window seat might make it more likely to get carsick.”

“Since she’s able to battle against Gabriel so skillfully, would she even get carsick?”

Emi thought back to the time when Alas=Ramus, not yet merged with the holy sword, was able to easily overwhelm the power of an archangel.

“... ..Who knows. Demons are also allergic to cats and can get heat stroke.”

“.....Yeah, she can attack Gabriel with a headbutt and yet cry when her head hits the train’s window.”

“.....Uu?”

Emi and Suzuno laughed dryly a few times and then suddenly bowed their heads weakly.

“Besides, they just went to Chiba, why would they suddenly go to Nagano now? Can’t they just be contented with what they have? I hope they would just spare some consideration. I still have to take some off days just to watch them.”

The “they” Emi was referring to using an annoyed tone was of course Maou and the rest.

“Also, they earned quite a bit from working at Ooguro-ya right? The last time, they dragged Chiho-chan into that kind of incident, so what’s the meaning of running here and there now!”

“...well, but this is for...”

After listening to Emi’s rant, Suzuno opened her mouth in order to say something but she was tactfully stopped by Emi.

“Wait, I know what you want to say.”

“Hm.”

“For a Demon King who keeps going on and on about conquering the world, he only decided to move from Tokyo to Chiba and Nagano, even I can tell that they considered themselves to be contented. I know that kind of thing already.”

“.....Uh-huh.”

“Anyway, that guy shouldn’t be able to bear with idling around at home for even one day of rest right? Even if that’s not the case, that apartment doesn’t have air conditioning nor does it have anything to help pass the time. I am completely unable to imagine that Demon King blankly lying on the floor watching television.”

“.....Then, what do you want to say?”

Suzuno could only laugh bitterly when she watched as Emi become more agitated while talking.

Suzuno did not think that far, and was not even considering saying those words. But when Chiho introduced the work to Maou, Maou did look as though he was sick of the “rest” life.

Aside from Urushihara who did not want to go out, both Maou and Ashiya agreed almost immediately.

Even though the pay was not considered high, it included three meals and they can even bring back some of the harvested crops as a greeting gift. For the current Maou and the rest, they could ask for nothing better.

Which was to say, because what Suzuno witnessed matched exactly to what Emi predicted, she was unable to understand what the agitated Emi really wanted to say.

“What I...what I hate the most is...”

Emi wanted to forcefully point her finger at Suzuno but suddenly her face turned completely red, then she grabbed her own head. And once again, she sat on the bench which she just stood up from.

“I hate myself for being able to imagine their situation so easily!”

“Are you really that pessimistic...ah, I guess you are.”

Suzuno scratched her face while trying to guess Emi’s complicated thoughts.

For Emi who was aiming to kill her archnemesi, the Demon King, it should be a good thing to be able to predict her opponent’s movements and thoughts.

However, Emi had no interest in the economic concepts, labour considerations and diligence of the Demon King's group.

“Firstly!”

“Oh?!”

This time Emi stood up with vigor. Alas=Ramus who was obediently sitting beside her raised her head to look at her. Suzuno also let out a low sound of surprise.

“Never mind about them going to the Sasaki household to help out. I am especially upset about the point that they are helping out with farming work!”

“Tha, that's something that can't be helped right? After all, the Sasaki household's occupation is as such.....”

Emi's rant was almost to the point of finding fault out of nothing and Suzuno was overwhelmed by her imposing manner.

“Those bastards who flattened the wheat fields of my hometown actually have the nerve to work in a farm?!”

“.....Ah.”

Emi's hometown in Ente Isla was destroyed by Urushihara's - Lucifer's army at that time.

Emi was considered the daughter of a farmer the last time so just based on this incident, it should be very hard for her to accept Maou and the other two demons' actions.

Perhaps Emi realised that Suzuno did not know how to continue the conversation. She suddenly raised her eyebrows and sighed as though she was taking a deep breath.

“.....Sorry, I got too agitated.”

“No, it's fine. Emilia, you actually have that kind of reason in mind.”

Even though Suzuno could only say such few words to Emi, she still lightly touched Emi's hands, carried her luggage and then continued talking in a carefree voice.

“So, there's still some time before the bus sets off, shall we go somewhere to pass the time? The air-conditioning in this place should be too strong for Alas=Ramus right?”

“...Un, Yeah.”

Suzuno's cheerfulness, however, looked somewhat unnatural.

Rather than just a cursory statement like "I can understand your feelings" to Emi, Suzuno chose to accept Emi's feelings. This is her way of being sincere.

Emi was also not agitated to the point that she did not understand such small matters.

"If the journey is going to take four hours, it's going to be late night by the time we reach there. Even though it's a bit late, but if the expressway becomes jammed, it's going to be troublesome. Shall we go get something to eat."

"Let's do just that."

"Co-rn-so-up!"

Alas=Ramus reacted to the three words "something to eat" and started pulling on Emi's hand and pleading.

"Ok, be good. We'll go drink corn soup. Lately, this child seems to have fallen in love with cream of corn soup."

"Then shall we go to a western restaurant? Even though the only restaurants I know of in this area are Udon restaurants..."

The map of Shinjuku West Exit appeared in Emi's mind and she started thinking about which restaurant to go to.

Because of Suzuno's words, among all the numerous Western restaurants that Emi was thinking of, the image of an Udon shop called Mamaru accidentally appeared. She decided to treat that search result as an error and ignored it.

(T/N: Mamaru is a parody of Hanamaru, a Udon chain restaurant in Japan)

“Even though the portion is more catered towards males, I know a western restaurant that has tasty and affordable food. Shall we go there?”

And just like that, the Hero and inquisitor who were chasing after the Demon King, brought a child who had the holy sword inside her and headed towards the western restaurant which had corn soup.

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“H, Hey! Urushihara! Look at that!”

“Wa, wait...I'm still a bit giddy.”

“That house next to the river looks like a Kappa's face!”

“Ah, you noticed it, Maou-san? That place is called the “Kappa Hall”, it looks like a joke, doesn’t it?”

“Eh? Is that so?”

Riho’s words made Maou look back to the “House with the Kappa’s face” they just passed with a suspicious gaze.

“That place has an exhibition on this countryside’s data facts and kappa legends.”

“There shouldn’t... really be kappas around right?”

Maou scrunched up his brow as he thought of the UMA special program that was broadcasted on television lately.

(T/N: UMA = unidentified mysterious animal)

“Even though it doesn’t exist, that place displays the Kappa legends that have been passed down since ancient time. Anyway, I’ve never been inside before.”

“Oh.....”

The river next to “Kappa Hall” is the Tenryu river, so isn’t it easy to for water youkai legends to develop?”

Chiho turned her head back to look at the bridge and gave some additional explanation as such.

“...I see...If that’s the case then perhaps...”

Ashiya started reacting to Riho’s words on his own accord and started muttering.

But no one noticed the unclear words he was mumbling to himself.

“Ah, we’re almost there.”

Chiho turned back and said, and the three men tensed up when they heard her.

When it was almost time to meet their new employer, anyone would be nervous.

Chiho and her father specially introduced this job to them. Aside from Urushihara, the other two straightened their backs and told themselves not to do anything which would bring shame to them.

The car was driven up a slope and followed a road in between the trees. Soon, they reached the end of the grove and their field of view suddenly expanded.

“Woah!”

The first one to let out a sound of amazement was Ashiya.

Through the glass of the windshield, the scenery that suddenly appeared before their eyes was the green peaks of the Southern Alps that Chiho and Riho were talking about.

The clear sky and the lush green earth took Maou and Ashiya's breath away.

“Ah, just to mention.”

Just as Maou and Ashiya are still gasping in amazement at the distant Southern Alps, Riho casually said,

“The hill which we are on...or should I say mountain, aside from the roads, they are mostly Sasaki household’s land.”

““EHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHHH””

Maou and Ashiya's loud roar, caused Urushihara, whose motion sickness returned, to tremble.

“Oh, so sorry to trouble Riho to come here from so far away~ You're finally here, finally here!”

“Long time no see, nee san. Sorry we were late.”

She probably walked over when she heard the sound of the car.

There was an attractive middle aged woman waiting for them in front of a lone large dwelling.

“Oba-san, long time no see.”

Chiho and Riho got off the car first and that woman greeted them with all smiles.

“Yo, Chiho! Long time no see! You've grown taller again!”

As though treating Chiho like a child, she touched her head. Then when she saw Maou and the rest getting out of the car in a timid manner, she smiled broadly again.

“So you are Maou-san!”

“Ah, y, yes. Hello, it’s a pleasure to meet you.”

The bright voice was suddenly directed at Maou and he subconsciously straightened his back.

“Oh my, you really are doing us a great favor, I’m really grateful for that. When I heard about this from Senichi, from the bottom of my heart, I really felt that the heavens were blessing us.

Even though the Demon King had nothing to do with heaven’s blessings, he could not make a refute about that either. Whatever it was, Maou still bowed first.

Because he was the king of demons, all the more he could not lose in terms of courtesy.

“My name is Maou Sadao, I’ll be intruding on you for the time being, please take care of me. Ah, the taller one is Ashiya Shiro and the shorter one is Urushihara Hanzo. Hey, both of you.”

Maou called the two of them over, after which,

“Ashiya-san and Urushihara-san, you really came at the right time! We’ll be in your care from now~~”

She bowed her head even lower than Maou and the other two.

“Sorry for intruding, I’m Ashiya Shiro.”

“.....I’m Urushihara.”

“I’m Chiho’s aunt Yumiko- Ah, Riho, Maou-san and the rest of you took such a long ride here, you must be exhausted! Quick, come in and have a rest! Riho, please park your car at the usual place! Chiho, Maou-san’s room is already ready. Just bring them to the room on the right side of the second floor. I’ll go get my husband ~ Dear! Dear~~~!”

(T/N: Actually she used to term Otou-san to call her husband...but it’s kinda weird in english so I changed it to dear.)

Like a tornado, Chiho’s aunt finished her sentences one after another and then turned and dashed into the house.

“.....”

Maou was stunned by this overwhelming atmosphere and he blanked out for a short while.

“Then, Maou-san, Ashiya-san, Urushihara-san, let’s bring the luggage into the house first.”

“O, okay.”

“Y, yes.”

“...Ugh.”

With Chiho prompting them, they took their meagre luggage from the car boot, followed Chiho and opened the main gate to the house.

“It...it’s huge.”

The first one to let out a sound of amazement was Ashiya.

The Sasaki old home was purely in a Japanese style. Just looking at the corridor from the lobby, one could tell that it was a worthy opponent to Sasazuka Villa Rosa’s common corridor.

And the lobby was wide enough to accommodate the whole of Sasazuka Villa Rosa room 201.

“H, hey, Ashiya. There’s a bend at the end of the corridor. Don’t tell me that there are more rooms back there?”

“I have no idea...even if there were, what’s the point of having so many rooms.....”

The Demon King and Demon general who conquered the city of an entire continent and stayed in the Demon Fortress were actually shocked by the spaciousness of a Japanese house in a farm in Nagano.

“So, let’s just put the luggage down first right? Even though it’s a bit strange for me to be saying this...There’s no need to be reserved, please enter the house.

Then again, it should be expected for Chiho. In the end, this place was a relative’s house where she visited several times, and she entered the lobby without any special feelings.

Maou and Ashiya nervously and tensely followed behind Chiho, and Urushihara did so as well while still having an ashen complexion.

“I, It’s better for us to put our shoes together right?”

“Y, yeah.”

Usually they would not even pay special attention to this kind of thing, but they became completely timid once they were in a foreign place.

“Oba-san said it was on the right of the second floor...here it is.”

Chiho was walking ahead of them and Maou noticed something else.

“Ah, Ashiya, just now, I realised something amazing.”

“Hm, may I know what it is?”

“Maou-san?”

In the depths of the corridor, Chiho turned around with an incredulous expression.

Maou was nervously glancing around since he entered the lobby and then he said,

“We can’t see the staircase from the lobby, don’t tell me the staircase is past the corner?”

“...wha...could it be!!”

Ashiya also realised what Maou was talking about and his expression became frozen.

“De, Demon King-sama.”

“Hm--mmmmm”

“We, we really came to an amazing place.”

“...Whatever, just hurry up already.”

Urushihara, who was still stuck in the state of motion sickness, just wanted to rest early.

He grumbled at the two who were lacking the aura of demons and were shocked by the vastness of the Sasaki household, then--

“Who’s there?”

““Uwahhhh””

Right after the grumbling, from behind Maou and Ashiya, a burly male pulled open the sliding door with a lot of force and the two subconsciously jumped in fright.

“Woah?! That startled me.”

Seems like the other party also jumped in fright.

From the appearance alone, he seems to be around thirty years of age. But a kind and gentle appearance and a wheat coloured well built physique made him look as young as Maou and Ashiya's human form.

“Ah, Kazuma-nii chan, hello.”

Only Chiho treated it as though it was nothing and greeted him with a smile on her face.

“Nii, nii chan?”

Maou's heart was pounding as Chiho used an honorific she would not usually use. He pressed down on his thumping chest while asking.

“Oh, Chiho, you, you're here. That means, these people are--”

The man who was addressed as Kazuma-nii chan turned and started looking at Maou and the rest as though sizing them up. However...

“Anyway, you guys must be tired after coming such a long way here. Just put your luggage aside first, we can deal with the greetings later.”

After that, he closed the door of the room he came out of and left the house through the lobby,

Looking at his back, both Maou and Ashiya seemed distracted. Meanwhile, Urushihara looked as though he was at his limit.

“Uh.....about that...”

“Ah, Kazuma-nii chan....is my cousin.”

Chiho explained, probably detecting Maou’s troubled expression.

Maou nodded and said,

“Because you called him nii chan, so I was about to say Chi-chan has siblings.”

“Ah...”

At that moment, Chiho realised the meaning behind Maou’s words and her face grew red.

“Sorry, because I called him that since young, I know it’s really childish...”

In the past, Kazuma also called Chiho “Chi” or “Chi-chan”. But that was all in the past.

At that time, Kazuma was a high-schooler and Chiho was just about to start elementary school.

Only Chiho was unable to leave behind this habit from the past and she was very embarrassed about it.

“Ah, sorry sorry, I didn’t actually mean that. Just now when I was talking to your mother, I had the feeling--”

“Huh?”

“Being able to see Chi-chan who is not like her usual self is really interesting!”

Even though there was no hidden meaning behind that,

“I, I don’t care about that kind of thing!”

For Chiho, that kind of statement hit the nail on the head.

“Hm? Did I say something strange?”

“It’s nothing! Just head this way~”

Chiho who was as red as a tomato patted her face with a pata pata sound while disappearing into the end of the corridor.

“Hey, wait! If you leave us behind now, we’ll get lost!”

“... ..It’ll be stranger if she didn’t run away.”

“Demon King-sama.....what you said to Sasaki-san just now was really a bit too....”

“Eh? Maou-san, what are you all still doing here?”

Just as Chiho disappeared from the corridor, Riho’s voice was heard from behind them.

It seemed that when Maou and the rest were thoroughly at a loss, the car had been parked.

“Ah, s, sorry.”

“Even though it’s not a major issue, everyone’s frantically rushing back when they knew Maou-san is here. And you might meet Kazu-kun too.”

“Yes, yes! Hey, Chi-chan, wait up!”

“Urushi, Urushihara, you hurry up too!”

“Who in the world is the one who’s being slow...”

After the turn at the corridor, they finally saw the staircase and waiting next to it was a blushing Chiho.

However, Maou could not help but think, there’s another section of corridor left.

For a house that was large to this extent.

What kind of people actually live in the Sasaki household of Nagano.

With Chiho leading, they climbed up the staircase and walked across another long corridor. The room behind the paper door which Chiho slid open,

“...It’s twice the size of the Demon Fortress.”

This was a deluxe guest room that could hold three people with plenty of space left and it overwhelmingly defeated the six-tatami room.

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What was opposite the room where Kazuma, who Chiho addressed as “elder brother” came out from, was a living room which had old style decorations.

Under Chiho’s directions, Maou and the rest arrived at the living room.

□ □

In the room was Riho, Yumiko and Kazuma, a man who looked a lot like Chiho’s father and....

“Ehh!? Grandma?!”

A petite old granny was sitting there too.

Chiho yelled in surprise when she saw the old granny sitting at the dinner table.

“Weren’t you hospitalised because you got injured?!”

“She did get hospitalised, technically.”

Kazuma, who was sitting next to the old granny, shrugged his shoulders.

From Chiho's and Kazuma's reaction, this granny was Chiho's grandmother.

This would mean, the one who, like Kazuma, had an expression as though they swallowed a stink bug would be Chiho's uncle, Manji.

"I know but..."

"Hmph, idiot. Do you think that kind of thing will injure me?"

Chiho's grandmother said in a low voice.

"Eh, but I thought you were attacked straight on by some wild boar or something..."

"There was no impact."

"Eehhh?"

Since the statements from her grandmother were different from what she heard before, Chiho went over to ask, curious.

“Well, find a place to sit down first. Uh, it’s Maou-san, Ashiya-san and Urushihara-san, right? Please sit over here.”

Kazuma let Chiho and Maou and the rest sit next to the long table which had a completely different kind of overwhelming presence compared to the casual kotatsu in the Demon Fortress.

“We really let you hear some ridiculous things. Thank you very much.”

The man who just happened to be sitting opposite Maou lowered his head slightly.

“I am Chiho’s uncle Manji. Even though it’s just for the sake of the term, I am the director of the Sasaki Household.”

Manji who was close to old age but still possessed a strong body glanced at his family members and started saying.

“This is our eldest son, Kazuma who is responsible for on-site reception. This is my wife Yumiko and my mother, Ei.”

“I am Maou Sadao, then these two here are Ashiya and Urushihara. We will be troubling you from now on.”

Maou represented the Demon Fortress and introduced his two subordinates. Then Urushihara and Ashiya bowed their heads.

“Uh, that is, Grandma, are you really okay?”

Once the self-introductions were done, Chiho could not hide her anxiety and asked.

Even though she was happy that her grandmother was okay, she was also perplexed by it.

“Well, if I had to summarise it. Grandma, even though she did encounter a wild boar while on the fields, she did not take the attack head on. Instead, she fell down after dodging the attack. So she was sent to the hospital for a check-up.”

“Eh.”

After hearing Manji’s explanation, Chiho’s eyes widened.

“I remembered telling you earlier to explain it as such.”

The grandmother, Ei, looked at her son, displeased.

“Even if you say that, Grandma, it’s been almost a year.”

Ei kept her mouth shut when she was persuaded by her grandson, Kazuma.

Chiho had a sudden realisation and she nodded her head while having a complex expression on her face.

“So, so that’s what happened. It’s great that it wasn’t actually anything worrying but...”

“Only the person who ended up in this worrying situation feels that it’s nothing to worry about. To return home and then go back to the fields on the same day, that’s what’s really worrying.”

Whether it was Manji or Kazuma, they started rattling on in a dialect that Maou was not familiar with. Even though the contents of what they are saying sounded to be expressing their displeasure with Ei, from their expression, it can be seen that they only sincerely hoped that the grandmother would quietly rest and recover.

“Any, anyway, from now on, just let us handle all the laborious tasks. Granny should just have a good rest....”

Maou, who understood that the conversation became something only involving the family members, quickly interrupted to let the topic end at this place.

“Ah right, even though I do not want to have any doubts of the people introduced by Sehichi and RIho-san, it’s going to be really though during this critical time. Would you be alright?”

Manji who finally lifted his head looked at Maou with a look which showed he was looking for confirmation.

“Actually, I don’t have the confidence.....Yeowch!”

Urushihara, who got frightened, had his sentence cut short as Ashiya pinched his arm.

“If it’s just something that requires physical labor, we should be able to handle what most people can manage. But we’re not confident when it comes to those specialised tasks.....”

Having heard Ashiya’s words, Kazuma shook his head.

“No, you won’t have to do such a difficult task. Just simple jobs involving harvesting and weeding. Even for such jobs, we don’t have enough manpower. We will definitely explain and teach you the tasks that we require you to manage. It won’t be something too difficult, so do not worry.”

Kazuma stood up and flipped the calendar which was hanging on the wall.

“Don’t be too concerned about the number of days. The people from the Farmer’s Corporation will come down five days later. Though you might feel frustrated due to the unfamiliarity of the situation, we’ll be counting on you guys the next four days.”

From Maou’s point of view, it was alright as long as it ended a few days before McDonalds was back in business. But since it was not longer than the time period discussed earlier, they nodded honestly.

“It is really the critical moment. Tomorrow, there will definitely be a large number of eggplants and cucumbers. Later on, my wife will teach you how to pick them.”

“Speaking of which, Kazuma-nii chan. Where’s Hinako nee-chan and Hikun?”

Chiho reacted to the word “wife” and asked after thinking for a bit.

“Ah, Hinako nee-chan and Hikun....Hitoshi-kun are Kazuma-nii chan’s wife and son.”

““...Ahh!””

Hearing Chiho’s words, Maou and Ashiya started nodding their heads in an exaggerated manner for some unknown reason.

Then both people walked towards Kazuma together,

““We thank you for the help you gave us!”

“Ah? What?”

Obviously Kazuma did not understand what they were doing.

But in Maou and Ashiya’s eyes, Kazuma’s family were their benefactors from faraway.

Last time when Maou and Emi’s “daughter” Alas=Ramus just arrived at the Demon Fortress, the one which provided a guiding light to the Demon Fortress which entered a busy mess due to not being used to taking care of children was the experience of taking care of a child that Chiho obtained from “the child from her brother’s home”.

Without that experience, it would have been very hard to take care of Alas=Ramus. Perhaps they would even not have been able to build up the good parent-child relationship they have now.

“Later, can we thank that Hitoshi-kun and your wife?”

“I agree.”

“I, I don’t really understand what happened...”

Kazuma who was slightly perplexed coughed dryly a few times before answering the question Chiho asked in the first place.

“Hisako brought Hitoshi out for a vaccination shot. I think they should be back quite soon.”

“Vaccination?”

“It’s something called a 3-in-1 vaccination. When they come back later, I will go to the fields with Dad. Sorry Chiho, when Hisako takes Maou and the other two out, can I trouble you to take care of Hitoshi?”

(T/N: Vaccination against MMR-Measles, Mumps and Rubella.)

“I understand, leave it to me.”

“Chiho also became a good woman. Riho-san must be pleased!”

Seeing that Chiho nodded with confidence, Yumiko let out a heartfelt praise.

“It’s not like that, Nee san. It’s because of her insistence to do a part-time job. It has nothing to do with me.”

Riho gave a wry smile while shaking her head.

Even though she understood what her mother was saying, strangely, Chiho was not interested.

“I see.”

Though Yumiko was still praising Chiho at the moment, her next sentence was an explosion that Chiho as well as Maou completely did not expect.

“Chiho, I heard that your cooking skills have improved a lot. Auntie is really happy to know that. You worked hard to level up your cooking for Maou-san’s sake right?”

“Eh?! Wa, wait a moment, mom! Y, you told Auntie?!”

Somehow, Chiho’s auntie knew about Chiho bringing her handmade food to Maou’s house.

Not just Chiho, even Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara were shocked.

‘Eh? Eh? What? Maou-san is Chiho’s “that”?!’

Kazuma asked in surprise and then curiously glanced between Chiho and Maou's faces.

“Nononono, that's not it! That, that, even though I wish it's correct and uh, this, um, now it's just Kazuma-nii chan's imagination only, owowowowow!!!”

Chiho who frantically decided to stand up, as expected, hit her knee against the long table and cried out because of the pain.

Every day, for the sake of explaining to her parents that that her relationship with Maou was nothing more than the platonic relationship between two different genders, she would report to them the happenings of the Demon Fortress, minus anything that had to do with Ente Isla.

But even so, the incidents of making homemade dishes for a specific man everyday was being revealed to a relative, who may be considered an outsider in this case. Just this made Chiho sweat cold sweat like the Nigeria falls and in addition to the effect of her aching knee, her face was getting redder and redder.

“Ah sorry, I accidentally spilt the beans.”

Of course, Riho's face was completely devoid of any apology. On the contrary, she joyfully looked at her daughter who was in a panicked state.

“Momomomommmmmooooooooommmmm!!!”

“Because, if only Chiho did the introduction, Manji-san would not be able to understand! So I felt I had to explain in detail things about their identity, that he’s very capable when working and that he is highly relied upon by Chiho.”

“Ah-! Chiho relies on you huh? Not bad, Maou-san. When we’re having dinner, I really must hear what happened around Chiho!

“Kazuma nii-chan! I already said that it’s nothing like that!”

“No, this, that, sighhhh.”

Although Maou wanted to try rebutting, it felt as though everything he said would become a land mine, so in the end, he chose silence.

“Well, in any case...”

The one who dealt a punch to this uproar was Manji, who expressed his thoughts as an ambitious parent.

“Chiho is at this age.”

“Uncle!!!”

And Chiho's fiery troubles were given more and more fuel.

“Granny also has Hitoshi as her only grandson...It's kind of sad. You must close the gap.”

At this point, even though many things were said earlier, they were a far cry from the brilliantly timed sentence,

“Wahuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuuu~!!”

“Ah, hey, Chi-chan?!”

Even if Maou wanted her to calm down, it was too late.

Chiho had reached the breaking point of embarrassment and she collapsed, her eyes spinning in circles.

“Are you sure this would not cause any trouble?”

“No problem! No problem! This is all our family's land after all!”

Although Maou who was sitting at the front passenger's seat did not think that this was the problem, the woman holding the steering wheel at the driver's seat did not bother to think more about Maou's concerns.

“Ya--, when I came back, Chiho-chan collapsed on the floor...I was wondering what happened--”

Right after Chiho fainted, the one who just came back was Kazuma's wife, Hinako. She was currently cheerfully driving a lightweight truck on the road in the fields which had no paving.

Hisako passed Chiho a boy, Hitoshi, who was about the same age as Alas=Ramus and then drove her light weight truck over. According to Kazuma, she bought the truck a long time ago. (T/N: Chinese translator not sure how to translate. Same here haha.)

If one wants to talk about the problem,

“Surprisingly, I don't get motion sickness when I do this--”

“I, I'm just thinking if we'll get fined if we somehow get seen by the police.”

Ashiya and Urushihara were on the deck of the lorry.

Urushihara held onto the roof of the lorry and stood up while looking ahead, while Ashiya tried as hard as he could to shrink his tall body on the deck.

(T/N: it's illegal to use a lorry/truck to carry passengers on the back on Japanese roads)

And right before his line of vision was a box filled with tools of unknown uses and a green folding chair.

“Ya-- But we really must thank you guys. With three men around, we can really shorten our working time--”

Even though it was not known why the first one to do the thanking was the Sasaki family, Maou and the rest haven't done anything yet. The feeling to properly thank the other party and the enthusiasm to work slowly but surely inflated.

“Ah, this place seems alright. I'm gonna stop.”

Hinako stopped her truck on a part of the road that looked no different from the rest.

Urushihara, who was very energetic and Ashiya, who on the other hand looked more like he was the one suffering from motion sickness, got off the deck of the lorry.

This was somewhere closer to the middle of a slope.

“Even though there isn’t a lot to harvest during this period, it’ll be dumb if we don’t use machines for such a wide place. I’m not sure how much Kazuma requested for you guys to do, but the main section which needs assistance is probably over there.”

The place where Hinako pointed at was an area where there were a few greenhouses covered in plastic.

“That is where we grow the eggplants. Also, the greenhouses next to it is where we grow cucumbers.

“Even if you say next to it...”

The three demons glanced at each other’s faces.

Next to it, Hinako made it sound very easy. However, just by looking, it’s estimated to be at least the distance of Ichome of Sasazuka. (i.e at least the length of one street)

As for the number of greenhouses, one can see ten of them up till the end of the vast field.

The area of one piece of land used to grow the eggplants and the cucumbers, if one included the area used to differentiate between the pieces of land, was

at least four times the size of the area where Sasazuka Villa Rosa was sitting on.

Because there was the mentality that one would be able to see the end if they went a bit further, they have to really stand there before they can witness the true vastness of the area.

“It’s not as wide as you thought, is it?”

“That comment is very troubling.”

Definitely, that was not something particularly massive if you took into account the fact that there was a mountain on the fields belonging to the Sasaki family.

But how great of a workload will this piece of land bring to them? Right now the completely inexperienced trio were totally clueless.

“Ah..., but if it’s like that, then who will take care of the watermelon fields over there? We really have to think which place should take priority.”

“Watermelons, is it?”

From where Maou and the rest are standing, they are not able to see the watermelon fields.

“It’s somewhere further down from here. If you get too close to the forest, you might get attacked by a Hakubin or something like that.”

“Hakubin?”

Is that an animal’s name? Urushihara asked as such.

“It’s about the size of a mouse. Well, if you really encounter one, it’s not such a dangerous animal. When you see it, it’ll probably run away immediately. Don’t worry.”

(T/N Hakubin means white centre on nose } ; 白鼻 . It is actually the masked palm civet...which is definitely larger than a mouse.)

Because of the previous disturbance in the farm which led to all the interns running away, Hinako used both hands to show the size of the Hakubin and emphasized how safe it was.

“Ah! Kazuma is over there! Hey~!”

At that moment, Hinako noticed figure coming out from the plastic-made green house and started waving vigorously.

Even though it was a bit far, that was definitely Kazuma. Having spotted this side, he started waving vigorously as well.

“Looks like we’ll start from the eggplants after all. Since we still have to wait for a week for the watermelons to be ready. Yeah.”

Hinako understood this fact alone.

“Since we took the trouble to come here, shall we take a look?”

She urged the three people onto the lorry and followed the long and narrow path before stopping the vehicle next to one of the plastic covered green houses.

“It’s going to be very troubling starting from tomorrow.”

Kazuma who noticed the other party moving towards him waited in front of the green house. he passed one out of the two or three eggplants in his hand to Hinako.

“Uwah, really...”

Hinako looked at the eggplant in her hand.

“Maou -san, Ashiya-san and Urushihara-san, I guess you’ll be handling the eggplant area tomorrow. Even though the cucumbers by the side seem to be almost ready as well, we still request that priority be given to the harvesting of the eggplants. We’ll teach you all the harvesting method tomorrow. Well, even though that being said, it’s just a matter of finding the large ones and cutting them off with a pair of scissors. It’s not a really difficult matter.”

“Yes, yes.”

“I understand.”

Maou and Ashiya comprehended the contents of the work for the following day.

“Uh, eh?”

But in the next moment, their attention was immediately stolen by Kazuma and Hinako’s actions.

“So what now? Shall we bring them to the watermelon fields for a bit? Maybe do a bit of weeding....what’s up?”

Kazuma noticed that Maou, Ashiya as well as Urushihara were all looking towards the same direction.

And in front of the three people's line of sight was,

“They got, they got thrown away...?”

The three eggplants that were easily thrown by Kazuma and Hinako into a box in the corner that was obviously used for containing trash.

“Um, that, that is, did you just throw away the eggplants?”

“Yeah, what...ahhhh”

Even though Kazuma did not realise what they were trying to say from the beginning, he realised their puzzlement when he followed their line of sight to what they were looking at.

“That's rubbish that cannot be sold or eaten. It's something normal throughout all the harvests.”

Kazuma smiled bitterly as he picked up the eggplants that were thrown into the rubbish box and took them in front of the trio and showed it to them.

“.....Ah.”

That eggplant had a large scar that was not noticed in the beginning.

The top of the eggplant also looked withered. It definitely was not in the state which can be found in the supermarket.

“But, but the rest...”

“This one looks as though it is already dead, and this one is far too thin.”

“Eve, even if it’s like that but...”

After that, Ashiya continued to maintain a state of silence.

Indeed, one of the eggplants was far too dehydrated and another seemed to be ripe but its lower half remained white.

However, for Ashiya, who was capable of making use of the ends of carrots and bean sprouts to make his food, eggplants with no market value can still be eaten normally.

As they normally imagined people from the farming community to be the sort that would treasure food, the actions of Kazuma and Hinako were very shocking to the Demon Fortress, especially Ashiya.

“Ah...I remembered that Aunt Riho mentioned it before, Maou-san is someone who is very thrifty right?”

At that moment, Kazuma clapped his hands hard as though he just noticed something.

“Since the three of you are from Tokyo, this must be the first time you did any farming work right?”

“Even though it's like that...”

“Ah, now that you mention it.”

From Kazuma's words, Hinako realised something and she nodded as though she was having a flashback.

“Even though I never mentioned it, I'm actually from a salaryman family.”
(T/N: Salary man family refers to the typical working class family in Japan as opposed to being raised in a farm.)

“During my university years, I met Kazuma in Tokyo and then came here after marriage but in the beginning I was pretty useless. That's how I felt now that I think about it. It was really only the beginning though.”

“.....?”

Kazuma decided to reiterate what he said earlier seeing that Maou and the rest did not seem to understand what Hinako was trying to convey to them.

“Well, you will understand when it’s tomorrow. Anyway, even though we’re only going to be starting with small tasks from now on but we’ll be leaving tomorrow’s preparation and work to you guys. Hinako, are there any cotton gloves on the truck?”

“Hmm....ah, there’s none. But given the current weather, no matter what we’re doing and where we’re doing those things, if we don’t get some water from home...”

“Then when you go back, get some gloves, towels and water as well. We’ll bring them to the watermelon fields at the bottom to do some weeding.

“Understood! The three of you, though I don’t think I should have to confirm such a thing at this time, the three of you are wearing boots that can be dirtied right?!”

Since it was something that was actually checked earlier, they only could reply by nodding.

Only Urushihara’s features stiffened due to the impending forced labour.

“It’s alright, it’s alright! It’s just pulling weeds. It’s not as though you guys will be harvesting those awfully heavy watermelons.”

Regarding the area of the watermelon fields, whether it was Maou, Ashiya or Urushihara, they did not hear because of the overwhelming terror.

After which...

“Hey, Urushihara~. Are you still alive?”

“.....”

“I think he’s dead. Ashiya....hey, Ashiya?”

“.....”

“Over here as well. He’s unexpectedly useless.”

That evening.

The three demons who were sent back to base by Hinako were essentially sore all over.

Ashiya and Urushihara slept on the tatami mat, twitching occasionally.

Even though he said that, Maou, while leaning his back against a pillar and holding a thermos flask of wheat tea in his hand, was only feeling moody.

The watermelon field where they did the weeding...perhaps it was due to the immense size of the crop itself but even if you added the area of the eggplant field and the cucumber field, the watermelon field was still larger.

Maou's field of vision was completely filled with watermelons that would probably cost a few thousand yen if they were sold at the supermarket since they still growing but would require a few more days before they can be of top quality.

And the first job of the day and the Sasaki household in Nagano was pulling the weeds from this watermelon field.

For the watermelon field where the plants are considered vines, it was impossible to use machines to get rid of the weeds.

The use of herbicides was eliminated from the Sasaki family's method of work. With the exception of vaccinations to prevent diseases and sanitation, everything was chemical free, even chemical fertilisers were not used in growing these plants.

And the agricultural work which requires a lot of care heavily relies on literal manpower.

As the watermelons were still in the midst of growing, one must take caution not to step on and injure the vines while getting rid of the weeds. For Maou and the other two who were not used to it, this was an immensely difficult task.

Even though the area of weeds that need to be removed was not even half of the large field, the work of having to use trash bags one by one to collect the weeds that spanned the size of an entire apartment seemed endless.

For the whole day, the process of bending over, pulling the weeds up entirely, putting the soil back and stomping them down hard was repeated over and over.

If this was not done, the watermelons might wither.

Of course, even by doing such a task, it was impossible to kill all the weeds. Not talking about the ones that get missed out and then regrow, birds and insects might bring some of the seeds over. And two to three days later, countless amounts of weeds will grow again. Therefore, weeding must be done on a regular basis.

This was exactly as how Manji described it earlier and----

“A big part of agriculture is battling with grass!”

with what Hinako had personally experienced.

“But, it’s true that if your muscles are not used to this kind of thing, you might get injured tomorrow.”

In a watermelon field that was, in reality, numerous times larger than the area used for the Sasazuka Villa Rosa apartment complex, the muscles that suffered a large strain were starting to wail.

In the midst of it, it was not known whether Urushihara was still moving. It may be considered quite amazing that he did not collapse in the fields.

As for the tall Ashiya, bending over seemed to be difficult for him and he could not feel any response from his own muscles.

“Even though it’s going to the bathhouse, there doesn’t seem to be any motivation left to go there.”

It was not as though he did not receive any explanation about the bathhouse, but not only were they lodging here, he could bathe in a bath house that was located somewhere in this household.

No matter how large the house was, having a large bathhouse was ridiculous. Besides, how on earth was someone supposed to stuff such a large bath house in a human's home. At the same time Maou's brain was going through all the remarks he wanted to make, his moodiness grew.

“Maou-san, there's no problem going in, is there?”

Maou raised his head as he happened to hear Chiho's voice from outside the room.

“What is it? Chi-chan.”

It was the first time he desperately whipped his muscles into work to open the door.

“Oh my, you guys seem really tired.”

However, the first voice he heard was not Chiho's but Riho's.

Then Chiho who was somewhat hiding behind her mother's shadow,

“Ah.....about that, Kazuma-nii chan was calling for Maou-san and those two.”

Her face became very red as she met Maou's eyes.

Maou was not an idiot who did not know the reason for such a reaction, so he decided to let the issue go.

“Kazuma-san is it? As you can see, Ashiya and Urushihara are both dead, it's ok if it's just me right?”

“Ah, if it's possible, then everyone...there's still some time to dinner time so Kazuma-nii chan said, everyone should be quite tired, do you want to go to the hot springs, something like that.”

This sentence not only made Maou's eyes widen, even for Ashiya and Urushihara who were in a frozen state as though they are in the freezer of a fishing company, raised their heads in extreme surprise.

“Hey-! It's quite pretty.”

“It's construction was finished after Aunt Riho went back last year. It's hasn't even been a full year yet though.”

Kazuma raised his eyebrows when he heard Riho's exclamation.

The location where Kazuma was driving his station wagon to was a brand new hotel that had hot springs.

For the convenience of visitors, in the middle of the hot springs resort and the hotel was another hot spring that non-lodgers of the hotel and resort can pay for to use.

The entrance fee was only a bit higher than that for the Sasazuka public bath house; for Maou and the rest, they were extremely lucky to be able to enter such a massive hot spring.

“Even though it’s possible to stay at home to bathe, it’s rather unenjoyable to bathe in such a cramped place.

Kazuma said as he parked the car in the parking lot.

“You’ll have to spend some money here but don’t worry about the fee. If you want to come here from tomorrow onwards, just ask.”

No matter how unwilling Maou and the other two were, there was no way to reject Kazuma’s good intentions so they decided to go with it.

From the parking lot which was located on the mountain twenty minutes from the Sasaki main house, one could clearly see the lights of the streets of Komagane City.

The parking lot also had special lots meant for cabs and a bus stop for closed loop shuttles. The business of this hotel had already reached legendary levels.

Kazuma was highly familiar with this area so he explained once where the vending machines, massage chairs and so on were.

“So Aunt Riho and Chiho can go that way and we can go this way. There’s a clock inside. Granny will be very naggy if we go back too late for dinner so we will assemble at the hall at six-thirty.”

The hot springs for men and women were separated.

Steam from the Ganban’yoku drifted out. Just at the moment the clock on the wall was moving silently and when the group decided to go their separate ways into the men’s hot springs and women’s hot springs.

“Uwahh?”

Chiho’s knee knocked into something and it almost made her lose her balance. Her voice also became a bit higher.

“Hm? What is it?”

On Maou’s side where their backs were facing Chiho’s noticed the commotion and were about to turn.

“Eh, ah....”

Chiho noticed the existence that was hugging her leg tightly and her line of vision also went towards it,

“AREHHHHHHH?!”

After which, the tone of her voice went up several pitches.

The one hugging Chiho’s leg was a little girl whose skin was a bit red from just entering the hot springs.

Silver hair that felt as though they were as long as the milky way.

Purple bangs dangling above the face full of smiles directed at Chiho.

“Chi-nee chan discovered!”

“A, A, Alas=Ramus Chan?! W, why?!”

“Urk!!”

“Wha!”

“Ehhhhh?!”

And the ones who reacted to Chiho's scream were of course the three demons.

Maou spitting in anger, Ashiya's whole body stiffening and Urushihara stepped back, wary.

The one smiling and hugging Chiho's leg was Alas=Ramus who treated the Demon King and the Hero as her parents and was the form taken by a gem fragment that made up the foundation of the world and was merged with the Hero's Holy Sword.

And if Alas=Ramus was here, that would mean,

“Wait up, Alas=Ramus, it's dangerous to run about!”

“That's unusual, for Alas=Ramus to run off on her own. You see, it's dangerous if you knock into some...”

The people who were chasing after her will definitely appear.

With the pitter-pattering of sandals, two people ran over and appeared at the corridor connected to the women's hot springs.

“Yu, Yusa-san! Suzuno-san!!”

Aside from Yusa Emi and Kamazuki Suzuno, there should not be anyone else.

The two were not wearing the personal clothes and kimono they usually wear. Instead they were wearing the yukata provided by the hotel.

“Ah, Chiho-chan?! Why are you here?!”

“That should be my line!!”

Rather than Chiho and Riho who were surprised by Alas=Ramus’s appearance, it was Maou who reacted faster than anyone else to Emi’s statement and he slid in front of Chiho and got close to Emi’s face.

“To, too close! What, the Demon King is here too?!”

To Maou, the words that Emi said regarding her surprise to meeting Chiho here was too much for him to expect and his face was extremely contorted as he got nearer in a deadly imposing manner.

“I knew that you two will appear sooner or later! Even though I expected it, both of you did not have to show up on our first day when we were just about to heal our fatigue! At least wait till we’re done soaking in the hot springs! Every time, every single time, you have to ruin whatever we’re trying to do, damn it!”

“Wha, what are you saying! Wait, you stink of sweat, don’t come so near!”

For Emi who grabbed Maou and then reestablished a further distance, Maou did not keep quiet about it.

“There’s the stink of sweat, so what if there’s a stink of sweat! It’s proof of labour! Perspiration is a men’s medal!”

Maou and Emi who could no longer hold a proper conversation and started arguing.

“Ma, Maou-san? Do you know these people?”

Kazuma who finally recovered from witnessing Maou arguing with an unknown woman asked Maou with some fear in his voice.

But Maou and Emi were too heavily engaged in arguing and they did not hear Kazuma’s words at all.

The one who helped them answer was Riho.

“Yusa-san and Kamazuki-san, both of them are Maou-san’s and Chiho’s friends.”

“Ignoring what you said about Chi-chan, that person and I aren’t friends at all!”

“Urhmm, in other words, that, what exactly is...”

Unable to understand the meaning of what Maou and Riho said, Kazuma decided to ask again.

Definitely, Maou predicted that Emi would conduct a raid.

Even though that was said, both parties did not expect meeting each other here in such a situation. Chiho, Ashiya and Urushihara were racking their brains about how to explain Emi and Alas=Ramus’s situation to Kazuma.

On the other hand, Suzuno deeply understood that in the presence of Chiho’s mother, Riho and Kazuma whom she met for the first time, being here was a terrible thing and her face turned ashen.

If one had to explain the reason why, as Alas=Ramus first stayed at the Demon King’s Fortress when she first came to Japan, to outsiders, she was portrayed to be Maou’s relative. And afterwards, it ended up with Emi taking care of her due to some unforeseen circumstances due to an incident that happened to Alas=Ramus.

Of course, there was no way they could tell the whole truth, the other party would not believe it in the first place.

But to outsiders, what they see is Maou passing his relative's child to Emi, who had absolutely no connection, to care for her.

If it was any other person, they might say that there was some kind of special relationship between Maou and Emi, some words that might cause a misunderstanding, but Riho was not like that.

Riho was very clear about her daughter, Chiho's fondness towards Maou as well as the distance between Maou and Emi as Japanese people.

To be able to find an acceptable explanation for Riho to explain what the source of the problem, Alas=Ramus, had to do with both Maou and Emi, the explanation that there was a special relationship between both of them should not exist.

Just as the people who clearly understood the truth were at their wit's end, being unable to think of a better explanation, their efforts went to waste as the bomb next to Chiho's leg exploded.

“Mama, mama! Want to bath with Papa one more time! Massage!

Alas=Ramus said as she ran back next to Emi's leg, pulled on Emi's Yukata and pointed at Maou.

“Mama...Papa?!”

Kazuma looked from Emi to Maou and correctly understood the meaning of the little girl's words.

“Ahh, that child is Alas=Ramus right? Yusa-san is the mother.....Eh, Chiho, that child, isn't she Maou-san's relative?”

At the moment Riho thought about Alas=Ramus's situation on the surface, Chiho, Ashiya, Suzuno and Urushihara predicted the incoming brutal bloody complexity of the common morals and common sense of the modern society and froze.

Chapter 2: The Hero, becomes a legend

勇者、伝説となる。



Nine o' clock at night.

With Kazuma taking the lead, the members of the Sasaki family all went to sleep quietly. Was it being unused to the laborious work or was it due to the relaxing effects of the hot spring, or maybe the blankets that were prepared were extremely comfy, Ashiya and Urushihara were very willing to fall asleep inside the room.

Only Maou left his bedding and pulled open the sliding door. Taking care not to wake Ashiya and Urushihara up by accident, he went over to one of the rooms along the corridor, softened his voice as much as possible and made a phone call.

“...yes?”

After a few rings, a suppressed unhappy voice replied. Maou used an unhappy tone that would not lose to that voice to engage in battle.

“...Hey, Emi, what are you planning?”

“.....What are you doing at this kind of time, the sound of the phone would wake Alas=Ramus up.”

The one who answered the call was Emi.

“...Bell, sorry, wait a moment, the Demon King...Yeah, I took the keys already.....SO, WHAT IS IT?!”

“Hey!”

Are they leaving the room of the hotel?

He thought there was another conversation happening on the other side but suddenly a highly threatening voice came out. Maou was a bit startled by it.

““What is it” my foot! I should be asking what you guys are up to instead! What in the world are you planning!”

“I am not planning anything, we are also in favour of Chiho’s family. We’re only planning to repay them for a bit right now? And this way, it also helps relieves the burden of you people who are not used to farming work and tired to the point of being out of breath. Why do you want to complain about that?”

“Never mind about the first part of what you said, are you really sincere about the second part?”

Against Emi who was talking non-stop, even though Maou understood that she was unable to see it, he was unable to perform the action of baring his fangs to threaten her.

※

After the unexpected incident at the hotel, Maou made use of the spirit and wits he had while conquering the Demon World and desperately defended to situation, mostly to explain everything to Riho.

The explanation was as follows: Not only Chiho, Suzuno, as their neighbor, who they were on friendly terms with, also helped to take care of Alas=Ramus.

This time when they came over to the Sasaki household in Komagane, in order not to let Riho or the rest of the Sasaki family worry, he left Alas=Ramus with Suzuno.

But Emi, who occasionally goes over to visit Suzuno, looked a lot like Alas=Ramus's mother, so Alas=Ramus misunderstood and became very clingy to her.

At this part, Maou passed the topic to Suzuno.

Suzuno continued by saying: Even though she was passed to me to be taken care of, Alas=Ramus really wanted to see her father in Japan so she quietly snuck out.

Emi and herself were unable to get rid of that loneliness.

But in the end, it still became something that would trouble you guys. So we just kept thinking that we might be able to meet all of you somewhere and since we could sightsee as well, we brought her here.

The conversation from above was not discussed and it was established in a blink of an eye.

After listening to this point, Riho's reaction was --

“It's a problem to neglect the issue that your own kin had forgotten your face. Even though I do not want to point out the faults about other people's family, Maou should strictly say something to your relative right?”

Taking a jibe at the non-existent relative of Maou as well as----

“Rather than giving the child a burden, you should have brought her here in the first place.”

This kind of advice.

The issue of bringing Alas=Ramus here in the first place, because of the special relationship between her and Emi, it could not be done. But it was pointless to say such a thing.

At least the situation of bringing down Maou and Chiho who admired him was avoided.

“My friend from my school days is now at the age where he is extremely busy at work and with a lot of effort, he managed to spend time with this child. But he complained that there was one time when he got forgotten by his child and he cried.”

Kazuma added on another comment as a man from the working population. Although it was not a very strong point, it was still useful.

Anyway, Maou and the rest maintained their status in the society.

At that point, everything went well.

If only Emi did not say those unnecessary things.

“That is.....Kazuma-san.”

“Yes?”

“This is the first time we’re meeting, yet I let you see such an embarrassing scene. Even though it’s a bit thick-skinned for me to request something of you.....”

Emi had switched to her proper-member-of-the-society- face and looked at Kazuma directly.

At that moment, Maou did not know why, but he had an unpleasant feeling.

“Yusa-san?”

Chiho who was holding her breath while watching the scene unfold also realised that Emi was going to take some kind of drastic action.

“A request? What is it?”

“I only heard about this from the conversation between Chiho and Suzuno, but during this time, the number of workers you planned to hire was six people right?”

In response to Emi’s request to confirm the details of the issue, Kazuma nodded.

“That is correct.”

Emi, who looked as though she was determined to do something, said the words that no one expected.

“Can you hire me and Suzuno, just like you did for Maou and the rest? My family used to grow wheat, even though the area is small, I still have experience with wild vegetables or fowl. I think I’ll be more helpful in the beginning than Maou and them.”

※

“Hmph, I heard from Kazuma-san that your useless general only cut grass for about two or three hours before he was tired to the point that his head started spinning?”

“I don’t think Kazuma-san spoke with such malice.....”

Emi’s request was indeed abrupt.

But to the Sasaki family, an increase in manpower was something they could only wish for. Kazuma immediately conducted a simple interview in the hall of the hotel. In a situation where Maou could not interfere and could only resort to yelling, Emi and Suzuno were hired to help temporarily.

The dates in which they were helping were the same as Maou’s and the other two.

Because of this incident, they ended up spending too much time in the hotel. The first dinner for Maou and the rest was therefore settled at the restaurant of the Komagane hotel.

Because Kazuma unexpectedly managed to secure extra workforce, he was extremely delighted. However, Maou was in a bad mood the whole time. Alas=Ramus was seated in between her “parents”, had a kid’s meal, drank some corn soup and was very satisfied. It was not known what Emi was thinking about but she was chatting very happily with Kazuma. Chiho kept looking at the moody Maou in a worried manner. Suzuno then started chatting with Chiho, who was jealous, it was unclear what they were thinking, but they left their seats together. Riho was highly interested in the situation where her own daughter was unable to remain calm. Ashiya purposely sat next to Kazuma and was racking his brains to ensure the atmosphere would not become dangerous. Meanwhile, Urushihara was having his meal at his own pace.

Maou was supposed to have his entire day’s fatigue healed in the hot spring, but he ended returning with even more fatigue piled onto him.

“Anyway, I understand that we are unable to fully leave your line of sight, but you should draw the line somewhere right? Besides.....hey, Emi, are you listening to what I’m saying?”

“.....”

Maou was perplexed by the sudden silence.

“.....Even though I do not know what you guys are planning by taking up this kind of job.....”

“Huh?”

“But let me tell all of you, don’t look down on farming. I’m going to hang up, I have to wake up early tomorrow, I’m going to bed.”

“Eh? Emi, what do you mean by that...! ...She hung up.”

Just like someone dropping the receiver of a landline phone, Emi ended the phone call by herself.

“What is up with her...Hm?”

Maou started to mess up his hair in frustration then he raised his head when he heard the sound of someone knocking on the sliding door.

“Maou-san.”

It was Chiho’s voice. Maou had a sudden realisation and he looked at the mobile phone in his hand.

The voice that was suppressed earlier, became a loud conversation with Emi.

This was not the Demon Fortress of Sasazuka Villa Rosa, it was the Sasaki family home at Komagane. He probably disturbed the family members who were sound asleep.

“S, sorry Chi-chan. Was I too noisy?”

“Eh? Ah, no, not at all. Did you do something?”

Chiho, who was on the other side of the door, was feeling doubtful.

“Nothing much, I just gave Emi a call to voice my protests. Speaking of which, Chi-chan, do you have something you want to tal...Hm?”

Maou stood up and wanted to open the sliding door but he could not open it.

“Uh? Chi-chan?”

Just by using a bit of strength, he could tell that the other person was holding the door down.

In this case, the only one who could be pressing down on the door would be Chiho.....

“I’m r, really sorry. Now that I think about it, I’m not mentally prepared yet.....”

“Huh?”

Since she was the one who came over here with something to ask, mental preparation shouldn't be required right?

“Phew----.....Ha.....--”

There was the sound of someone taking a deep breath. What in the world is going on.

“Pl, Please open the door.”

Chiho finally said something.

Even though it felt like such a sentence should be said by the person inside the room, he did not ask any further and opened the sliding door with some nervousness.

And then,

“Good, good evening. Maou-san.....”

The greeting that was heard once more came from somewhere slightly below Maou's face.

In the corridor that was bathed in the slightly yellow light coming from LED bulbs, Chiho, who was obviously not calm, was standing there.

Her hair which was usually tied at the sides using ribbons or elastic bands was let down. The bands that were usually around her hair were now worn on her thin wrist.

Under a slightly old and baggy shirt, one could still tell that her bosom was ample. She was also wearing sweat absorbing knee length shorts. Her feet were bare.

No matter how one looked, that attire was bought from the department store and could be considered what someone wore when they are lounging around at home.

“Oh, what is it?”

“H, hello....”

Although it was hard to tell in the dim light, Chiho who raised her head to look at him seemed to be blushing.

“So, what’s up?”

Maou thought it was unusual that Chiho who came to find him could not express her intentions after so long, so he asked again.

“About that.....”

Even though Chiho’s face was constantly red just now, once she saw Maou’s reaction, she quickly reverted back to her original expression and said what she wanted to say.

“.....I, I’m really really sorry, coming over here in such an attire.”

“Eh?”

Now Maou was completely confused.

Since they were going to sleep later, there was no problem wearing lounging clothes. Besides, Maou himself was only garbed in his underwear, a T-shirt as a top, knee-length shorts at the bottom and he was bare footed.

Since he was no different from Chiho in this aspect, so he replied as such--

“It’s nothing much, so what do you want to talk about?”

And very naturally asked a question back.

“.....that is, it’s not that I don’t have nothing wrong at all... I mean I’m okay.”

Like a flash, a discouraged air can be seen around Chiho.

“Sigh.....It was about just now, just now you called Yusa-san to talk about work?”

Chiho who let out a small sigh, and, in order to have a change of pace, nodded her head a bit and asked Maou.

“It is about work. Even though I can understand that person’s feelings, I feel that I still have to complain about her causing Kazuma-san and all of you trouble like that...”

“I don’t think it should be a problem, we needed manpower in the first place.”

“But even so...”

It seemed like Maou was unable to agree with Chiho’s words and he started frowning.

“There’s no need to get hired right? It’s not as though we’re going to be here for a long time. Just observe from the distance like some stalker, like she always did!

“Ah haha.....”

Chiho could only laugh bitterly at the frank comment about Emi being a stalker.

Emi was indeed chasing a very unwilling Maou and one can just manage to understand the situation until now based on the relationship between a Demon King and a Hero. However, Chiho felt that the movements this time was not something Emi would do in the past.

But on the contrary, Chiho was able to think of a reason now.

“Uh...I have something to say about Yusa-san...”

“Eh?”

Chiho smiled sweetly, took a deep breath and said.

“Shall we, shall we go out and take a walk?”

Chiho wanted to grab onto Maou's hand but did not have that kind of courage. So she settled with grasping his T-shirt.

“Hm? Hmmm? Uh, I don't mind.”

Coming from Chiho, an abrupt invitation to take a walk in middle of the night.

And saying that it had something to do with Emi.

Maou looked a bit to the side where his T-shirt was grasped.

“It's alright, let's go.”

After nodding in agreement, pulling with a strength that was too light, they left the room.

“Ah, but we can't go too far ok? There aren't any street lights around...”

It felt as though that was not really a problem. In response to Chiho who expressed such an unexpected word of caution, Maou nodded to show his understanding, and then,

Facing Chiho's back while going down the stairs quietly, without thinking much about it, he started to chat.

“.....!”

“It’s quite cute when your hair is put down. It’s good to do that once in a while.”

Chiho who was going down the stairs, suddenly flinched and stopped.

“It’s, it’s not as though I can do that just because I want to!”

Chiho turned her head around and like usual, widened her eyes as though wanting to argue back but seemed to be happy at the same time. She tried to rearrange the complicated expression on her face and said,

“It’s because, because I’m at home that’s why I can do this. This isn’t a look I can show just anyone!”

Even though she was flustered, she still took note of her volume. In order to distance herself from Maou, Chiho went ahead towards the lobby.

“Is, is that so....”

Even if this was the countryside, they were still going out. Even though she said it was not just for anyone to see, Maou saw it. Chiho opened the sliding

door of the lobby which was slightly ajar already and went towards the darkness of the night.

Maou deduced that Chiho, who kept glancing over but shyly turned her head away must have wanted to express something. So keeping a set distance, he followed Chiho outside.

“Ohoh....”

The road ahead where the lights of the lobby was unable to illuminate was just a pitch black darkness.

But his eyes adjusted immediately and he could make out the outline of the slightly greenish road.

Therefore.

“Maou-san, look.”

A few steps ahead in the darkness came Chiho’s voice but the sound was not directed at Maou. Instead it was directed towards the night sky.

Maou followed this sound and raised his head.

“Ohhhhhhhh -----.....”

A swirl of light was conquering the darkness.

As his eyes got increasingly used to the lack of light, he was able to see that the number of light sources were starting to swell in numbers.

Just by looking, it was a light show that appeared to be of the night sky being buried in stars.

“I got this feeling.”

“Maou-san?”

“.....that it’s been a long while since I saw a star-filled sky. Why is the starry sky so clear? Even when I was at Choshi, it was not this clear at all.”

“It’s probably because of the light from the moon.”

“The light from the moon mainly get blocked out by the mountains so it could not reach here. Therefore, you are able to see many stars. As for the situation in Choshi, the moon’s light shone all across the sky. Not to mention, we didn’t have time in Choshi to go moon watching.”

“Haha, it was indeed like that now that you mentioned it.”

Thinking back to the incidents from not long ago, Maou gave a forced smile.

“Oh, Chi-chan, Chi-chan, quick, look at that!”

“Eh?! What, what is it?”

Maou suddenly let out a voice of urgency, causing Chiho to become anxious as well.

“Tha, is it that?”

“It is, it is that! Come here, it’s that thing over there!”

Maou looked like he became even more excited.

“Eh, AH, WAH!”

He grabbed Chiho’s hand and pulled her towards his direction.

“MaMaMaMaMaou-san, thahtahthtthat.....”



“That! Just look straight from here and you can see a red star!”

“Yes, yes?”

Chiho was pulled over and basically ended up being hugged around the shoulder. She felt Maou’s body heat behind her and her blood pressure shot up accidentally. She managed to force her eyes to look in the direction Maou was pointing at.

“Isn’t the movement of that star strange?”

“Ehahahahahaehhhh?”

Chiho who was unable to cool down her rapidly boiling brain, still managed to capture the item and it turned out to be----

“Ahhhh!”

“That can’t be a UFO or something like that, can it?!”

Like a youth, Maou said words that were full of anticipation and started scratching his ear.

Chiho felt that she could not bear to deny those words for a bit.

“Maou-san, that is certainly a man-made satellite.”

“.....A man-made satellite? Something kind of like a weather satellite?”

“Even though I don’t really understand what a weather satellite is, I think the national space station can be seen by the naked eye, probably? That is probably one of those kinds of man-made satellites that is flying at a lower altitude.....oh my.”

While Chiho was talking, Maou looked obviously down-hearted, he sighed and continued scratching his ear and Chiho subconsciously tensed up.

“It’s like that huh.....but that’s pretty amazing, it’s just a tad disappointing. UFOs don’t exist after all.....”

“Uh, about that....”

Never mind about UFOs, if one wanted to discuss about the rarity of an existence, to an alien, the Demon King from a foreign world who was asking the question was also a little green man. For Chiho, this was quite difficult to answer.

“U, UFOs don’t really know.....”

“Then how about the Kappa?! That was manufactured in Japan right?”

“How would I know?! The country of manufacture of a Kappa or something like that?!”

The aforementioned imaginary creature appeared in the conversation. It seemed like Maou remembered the Kappa Hall he saw in the day time.

Chiho had never went into that Kappa Hall before nor did she do any intense research on anything related to the Kappa.

Though Chiho was close to Maou right now, her emotions suddenly became calmer.

Even though she did not carry any excessive hopes of quickly shortening the relationship distance between herself and Maou, even if it was just something like that, to talk about topics like aliens and Kappas under a starry sky with someone she likes, she really has no more excess energy to feel moved.

Any vector for romance bypassed the XYZ axis and flew towards other directions.

“.....Maou-san, about Yusa-san.”

If this went on, no matter how much time passed, it feels like the imagination which was full of fantasy will continue on. Therefore, Chiho brought up the topic that was very realistic for the current Demon King and High school girl.

“Oh, now that you said it, we did want to talk about Emi.”

Maou finally remembered what Chiho originally wanted.

Even so, Maou did not seem to have given up and continued to direct his gaze at different directions in the night sky.

“Do you want to know the reason why Yusa-san wanted to work with Maou-san and the other two at the Sasaki farm?”

“.....Hm.”

Maou continued looking at the night sky and let out ambiguous expression which was neither an affirmation nor a rejection.

“You heard about it from Emi.....It shouldn't be like that right?”

“I heard about it from Suzuno-san.”

When they were eating at the hotel, there was a period of time where Suzuno, taking Chiho with her, left their seats.

“That Emi is probably pretty bothered by it right? Even if Suzuno told me directly, I will feel troubled.”

“True. Suzuno-san said that as well.”

Chiho gave a wry smile.

“Really sorry for that. Because we diverted from the main topic too easily and we’re so calculative, we have to depend on Chi-chan for a proper direction.”

“And in exchange, I pass every day in an enjoyable manner, I’m glad that I can be of use in this kind of situation. If something should happen, you can protect my life too.”

The meaning was, I do not mind and Maou-san and the rest should not pay much heed to this either.

Maou was grateful for such a statement but he remained silent so the topic could continue.

“Yusa-san.....she’s has complicated feelings about Maou-san, Ashiya-san as well as Urushihara-san doing farming work.”

“.....So it was like that after all.”

What Chiho said did not exceed Maou’s expectations at all.

“You noticed?”

“Even though I do not understand the entire story, I am stepping into a line that I am completely an outsider to. I already feel that it is something that I’m pissed off with.”

Maou thought back to the exchange Emi and Kazuma had at the hotel just now.

“I completely forgotten, her family is a farming family.”

“.....yes.”

In the western continent of Ente Isla. That was the countryside where Emi’s, Emilia Justina’s hometown was.

Even though he had never heard about the details from Emi.

In Emi’s memories of her hometown existed a gentle and strong father.

Maou understood that her father, her family's occupation and the simple life that she led were all the things that Emi loved.

He also understood that it was them who destroyed that life and made it an entire mess for Emi.

“Of course she'll be irritated, we're the bastards who destroyed her farming life and we still have the nerve to come here to do agricultural work.

“Suzuno-san said that Yusa-san said the following”

“This really pisses me off. I'm really pissed at myself for being able to imagine those bastards' actions so easily!”

Seeing that Maou's serious face was getting more and more frowny, Chiho raised her voice on purpose.

“.....I feel a bit, jealous.”

“Let me off already.”

Since the topic about Emi was mentioned, Maou kept looking at something far away.

The Alps mountain range that looked very blue in the day time, under the starry sky, the dark outline encompassed the dark shadow of the land.

And what Maou was focusing on was the border between the mountain's darkness and the light from the sky.

“I believe Yusa-san hasn't managed her feelings yet.”

“Probably.”

Maou and Chiho thought back to the incidents that happened a few days ago at the Tokyo tower.

Chiho, who was a mere high school girl, appeared at the battle field where supernatural phenomena from a foreign world crossed paths.

From there, Emi knew about the truth that became the deciding factor behind the change in the relationship between herself and Maou.

“But that kind of thing and this thing can't be discussed together right? In the end, that person is under suspicion of ‘As long as she can interfere with what we're doing, it doesn't matter where I go’, don't you think?”

“About that, only Yusa-san would know.”

Even if it was just a speculation, based on Emi's personality until now, there was no way to reject such a thought.

“No matter what, it seems like it would become troublesome from tomorrow onwards. Even though she said things like she has experience, I don't know if Kazuma-san is going to let her do jobs that are different from ours.”

“I think that this trouble, was originally related to being able to fill the spaces left by the interns.”

“I guess now that you mention it, sigh--”

After saying that, Maou finally moved his gaze downwards.

When Maou was looking at the far-off distance, Chiho felt that he was different from the usual Maou. The aura of thinking about difficult things was now gone and the Maou that Chiho was familiar with was back.

“Maou-san.”

“Hm?”

“I've.....been thinking. Is there any way to let the people I like become happy from now on?”

“I don’t think there is.”

Right now, they were only dragging out the unexpected stagnation.

As long as the fact that Maou was the invading Demon King and Emi was the Hero that saved the world remains, it was unlikely that Chiho’s wish would come true.

Because Maou felt that way from the bottom of his heart, he quickly responded to Chiho’s tiny wish.

But Chiho was not faltered by the cruel answer and just smiled while next to Maou.

“You’re like Emi-san when it comes to that.”

“That’s why I said to let me off already.”

“I’m so jealous.”

Chiho said this in a playful manner and she light-heartedly left Maou and continued walking forward.

“Chi-chan?”

“It’s time to head back. Mother and Ashiya-san would get worried. Thanks for taking a stroll with me.”

The distance between their current location and home could not even be considered a stroll.

Chiho had already entered the house and Maou could not respond.

“Seriously, who do those people around me think Ashiya is to me.....”

Maou complained a single sentence softly. He looked at the starry sky once more and leisurely walked back into the house.

※

The next morning, the paper sliding door of the lodging that Maou and the other two demons were in was pulled opened aggressively to the point of outright violence. The impact was so huge it made one wonder if the pull door was going to get scrapped.

When the sliding door was slid open, it produced a resounding loud bang that sounded like it came from a firing of a rifle. Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara who were sleeping soundly all woke up with a jerk.

However, the attack did not end.

“What time do you plan to sleep until!!”

The culprit who set her scope on the three of them was Emi.

Maou and the rest could not even comprehend the situation. The person standing in front of them was neither Chiho nor was it Kazuma, it was not even a member of the Sasaki family. Instead it was Emi who should be located at a hotel that was twenty minutes away by car.

To be rudely awakened by a large sound that would cause anyone to mistake it for an explosion and then discover to their shock that the Hero was standing before them like a gate keeper in full battle equipment.

For the Demon King and the Demon Generals, to be awakened with such a soul-stirring method, they only experienced a handful of such experiences in their long life.

The only thing that could provide comfort for them was that the full battle equipment did not consist of the Holy Sword, armor or shield. Instead, they only consisted of a long sleeve shirt and pants, a sun hat and a towel around her neck.

However, the other party seemed to be holding something that looked like a sickle in her hand so there was no way to completely let down their guard.

“Wha, what? E, Emilia?!”

“Uhm.....Ugh....”

Realising Emi was present, Ashiya shook his head that had messy bed hair while trying to put up a defensive stance. As for Urushihara, even though he was startled to the point of jumping and turned around, he quickly burrowed himself under the covers again.

“Wha, what are you doing?! Why are you here?!”

Maou who finally fully awakened, protested as hard as he can in an exaggerated manner.

“You, didn’t you bring your ears yesterday? Didn’t I say I will be working here from today onwards!”

“I did hear that, what I’m asking is that why are you here waking us up..... Hey! Isn’t it only four-thirty?!”

Maou let out a moan as he looked at the time displayed on his mobile phone.

Because sunrise was earlier in summer, the sky was long lit up already. But no matter what, waking up at four-thirty in the morning was far too early.

However, Emi laughed through her nose and kicked away Maou's protest.

“Even if it's like this, I already let you guys sleep to the limit so quit your whining already. Aside from Chiho-chan, Hitoshi-kun and Alas=Ramus, the other people are already up and working.

“Eh?!”

“Umeah....”

Both Maou and Ashiya let out a useless sound at the same time while Urushihara continued groaning under his covers.

“Didn't Kazuma-san tell you all what time to start working?!”

“Eh, no, he did say the time to start work will be very early, but I didn't think it will be this early?!”

“It's summer! Isn't it obvious! Alright, hurry up and get up! There's already breakfast prepared downstairs!”

“So, so what if it's summer?! Uwah! I get it! Wait a bit will you?!”

“Uwahhh!”

Seeing that the demons seem as though they cannot bear to or have no intention to get out of their covers, Emi, in a fit of rage, grabbed the blankets and shook the demons out onto the tatami mats like she was shaking dust out.

“Ah, good morning, everyone.”

Under Emi’s fearsome and devilish urging, they minimally groomed themselves, went downstairs and pushed open the door to the kitchen. Hinako’s cheerful greeting came over together with the enticing fragrance of miso soup.

“You’re finally here, Sadao-dono, Shiro-dono! Alright, both of you quickly find a place to sit down!”

And they were also urged by a busy Suzuno to sit down.

“Why did you naturally assimilate into the kitchen?!”

Manji, Yumiko, Kazuma, Hinako as well as Granny Ei and Riho were already sitting next to the table. For some unknown reasons, Suzuno was rushing in and out of the kitchen.

“Oh, Maou-san, you guys are finally up. Actually it’s alright if you sleep in a bit longer.”

Kazuma noticed Maou and Ashiya.

“As expected of the people that Chiho chose. How hardworking.”

Manji nodded, satisfied, as he saw Maou and the rest appear.

It was hard to reveal that the actual thing that happened was that they were forcefully awakened by Emi’s acts of violence. Firstly, the thing that cannot be understood was why Emi and Suzuno naturally integrated into the Sasaki household so early in the morning.

However, after observing the scene around the table, Maou sincerely felt that it was the right decision for Emi to wake them up. From tomorrow onwards, he was going to depend on himself to wake up ten minutes earlier.

Aside from Riho, the rest, like Emi, were dressed in preparation to work in the fields.

That is to say, it can be seen that, even if you give a conservative estimate, everyone woke up, cleaned themselves up and made preparations to go outdoors before coming here for food before four-thirty.

And as for Suzuno who was at the kitchen making breakfast, exactly from what time was she here.

“Good, good morning.”

Maou and Ashiya followed Suzuno’s request and found two empty places to sit. Suzuno, who was wearing a bandana on her head and dressed in cooking attire making her look like a maid, walked over quickly and gave the two a heap of white rice, like that of a small hill, and miso soup.

“I gave you both more. Please eat as much as you can.”

“Ah, ok....”

Suzuno delivered them food with a face of generosity, just like the time she just arrived at Sasazuka Villa Rosa, and this made them think of the terrifying memories from back then.

“There seems to be a missing person. What happened to Hanzo-dono?”

Suzuno suddenly realised that Urushihara was not around and she asked while tilting her head. Maou and Ashiya, without any prior discussion, both pointed towards the ceiling at the same time.

“Erm?”

Suzuno followed the two people's fingers and raised her head to look at the ceiling and she noticed that the pull switch of the electric light was shaking slightly.

“That idiot Urushihara does not know the meaning of death. He stayed under the covers and refused to get up, so.....”

Right now, what kind of epic battle was unfolding on the second floor.

First it was at the Western Continent of Ente Isla, then it was at Sasazuka. No one would have predicted that the Hero Emilia and the Demon General Lucifer would battle it out a third time on the second floor of the Sasaki family home.

“We really can't do anything about them.”

Suzuno only could slump her shoulders and sigh.

Maou and Ashiya also felt the same way. While they prayed that at the very least, when they start working, Urushihara would be able to keep all his limbs, they went to pick up their utensils and food.

“Thanks for the food.”

The duo sent the rice into their mouths,

“UN!”

“OOO~”

And they each made a sound of amazement.

“It’s really delicious.”

A crystal clear natural sweet smell, like that of spring water, permeated their sinuses.

And following repeated chewing, the strong fragrant spread out, filling up their entire buccal cavity.

“T, this rice is actually?”

Ashiya, who had never tasted such a delicious thing and was deeply touched to the point that it excited his house husband heart, started talking to himself. Yumiko, who sitting opposite, said a striking sentence,

“Sorry about that, because that’s rice grains from last year, so it’s probably not that tasty.”

“Eh?!”

It was unclear whether what she said was real or just a simple humble statement. At the very least, during the one year or more where they lived at the Demon Fortress, Maou and Ashiya had never tasted such delicious rice.

“Eh? Last year’s rice? Eh? How can that be, it’s really tasty?!”

“Is it? I’m glad to hear that.”

Yet, it seems that Yumiko was saying the truth, Kuzuma saw that Maou and Ashiya kept looking at each added and supplemented by saying,

“The rice grains here were processed using a rice grinder last year. Last year, the harvest for the whole of Japan, due to some adjustments for production, we were left with a lot of rice. So we have no choice but to keep the portion which the Corporation did not want to take.

He just casually mentioned about “the rice grains processed by my family.”

“If Maou-san came a bit later, we might be able to let you all eat some delicious new rice.”

If such tasty rice cannot be considered delicious, then how indulgent to the taste buds would the so-called new rice be? It was unimaginable.

“Here!”

Suddenly, from the side, someone pushed a food bowl full of Nara pickled radish, prunes marinated with basil as well as pickled cabbage and other pickled vegetables in front of Maou and Ashiya.

“If you don’t eat more, your bodies which are not used to the field work will not be able to take it. You must eat your food well.”

Granny Ei said in a lazy manner.

“O, ok. Then thanks a lot.”

The two fearfully extended their chopsticks towards the food bowl.

“De, delicious.”

“Yeah, this is the first time I ate such a large piece of pickled vegetable.”

All the types of pickled vegetables were larger by a few times than the ones sold in Tokyo’s supermarkets. Just looking at them stimulates the appetite.

“Ahh, your throat will be parched if you only eat pickled vegetables. Suzuno-san, can I trouble you bring some tea over?”

Just as Manji finished speaking, Suzuno brought over a teapot which was the size of a hot water kettle as well as a tea container and started steeping green tea for the two.

Even though they encountered various types of chaos, thanks to this delicious breakfast, both of them were completely awake.

“Then we shall go out and start working after five. Maou-san and the rest of you should do some preparations....”

Just at the moment Kazuma stood up next to the table and started speaking, a dull thud was heard from the second floor. The strong impact caused the entire house to shake. Aside from Granny Ei, all the people looked towards the ceiling in reflex.

The silence continued for a short while.

“He finally got up.”

However, Urushihara was seemingly escorted down the stairs by Emi.

Maou and Ashiya were unable to imagine what kind of authority Emi pulled off to handle Urushihara who was too lazy to leave his bed. But...

“Yu, Yusa-san. From tomorrow onwards, please hold back a bit...”

Chiho, who was following the two, had an ashen face and Urushihara who was terrified to the point that he was silently trembling told the rest through their silence how miserable the situation was.

“Ah-- It’s cold!”

During the time when they were waiting for Urushihara and Emi to be finished with their breakfast, Maou walked out of the room and any intention for sleep was wiped away by the low temperature of the outdoors. He curled his neck and made a yelp.

“It’s only now. When it gets closer to noon, it will become as hot as yesterday. Here, quickly get on.”

In front of the house was a light weight lorry, a station wagon and the Sasaki family car that was used to send Maou-san and the rest over from Sasazuka.

Riho was going to return to Sasazuka ahead of them today.

It made people feel that she was leaving too early. But since Granny Ei was not hospitalised, there was also nothing much that Riho could do so she might as well drive home to catch up on her sleep while the traffic was clear.

Four days later, she will come back again to bring Maou and the rest back.

“So, Maou-san, Ashiya-san, Urushihara-san as well as Yusa-san and Kamazuki-san, we’ll be counting on you all.”

Before leaving, Riho bowed deeply towards Maou and the group.

“Chiho really made friends with a group of excellent people.”

“That’s, that’s too great of a praise for us....”

“We’re also always taken care of by Chiho so thank you.”

Maou was stammering a bit. On the other hand, Emi returned the gratitude in an articulate manner.

“Riho, be careful on the way.”

Yumiko also came out to see Riho off.

“Then I’ll be taking my leave. Ah, Chiho~”

“Hm? What is it?”

Riho started the engine and then pulled down the window to the driver’s seat, stretched her arm out to beckon her daughter over. She moved her head next to Chiho’s ear and whispered,

“Maou-san and the rest are still not used to the agricultural lifestyle. Don’t bring people out in the middle of the night again for a stroll ok?”

“Oh! Mo, MOM?! You were awake at that time?!”

The brain that was still half asleep received a heavy impact as though hit by a hammer.

Chiho who was screaming softly got caught by her mother and the upper half of her body was pulled through the window.

“If you think you can hide from your mother, then you’re making a big mistake~~.”

It was not sure how much Riho was trying to confirm through her daughter’s reaction, she gave a secretive smile and gave Maou a glance while looking past her daughter’s shoulder.

“?”

Maou, who did not hear the contents of the conversation between the mother-daughter pair cocked his hand to show that he does not understand. Of course, whether was Chiho or Riho, they will not resolve his confusion.

“Then I’ll see you four days later.”

Riho pushed her daughter who was trembling from embarrassment out of the driver’s seats and then she revved her engine once more and drove her car away to the far off distance.

Until they were unable to see any sign of the car, Chiho just stood frozen at her spot, stunned.

Even though Maou felt worried, he also had this small feeling that he should not talk to Chiho at the moment.

“The, then, let’s set off as well.”

Maou purposely threw the topic at Kazuma.

“Oh? Let’s go then. Everyone sit in Hinako’s car.

It seemed like no one had to sit at the back of the lorry today.

Kazuma and Manji were going to be travelling in the lightweight lorry while Maou, Ashiya, Urushihara as well as Emi and Suzuno were getting a lift in the station wagon driven by Hinako.

“Have a safe trip.”

Chiho, in the meantime, will be staying at home.

Her main job was to take care of Hitoshi and Alas=Ramus when they wake up.

Even with that said, Hitoshi was used to being taken care of by Yumiko or Granny Ei, therefore, Chiho technically did not have any task.

The lightweight truck and station wagon headed towards the fields at the bottom of the hill. They quickly disappeared.

“I say, Chiho.”

“What is it, Oba-san?”

Yumiko had a bizarre expression on her face. As her eyes followed the cars which Maou and the rest were on, she asked,

“They’re called Yusa-san and Kamazuki-san, right?”

“Eh?”

“They’re two great beauties~~. Surprisingly, Maou-san has some skills there. If you don’t watch out, they might just overtake you.”

“.....Eh?!”

Chiho was a bit slow in understanding her Aunt’s words. Her face which was originally red to the extreme, turned even more red in a flash.

“Even if your Oba-san is a bit biased, to me, Chiho is also a great beauty who won’t lose to anyone. It’s just that your personality is too serious, you’re not as tough as Yusa-san. If you don’t clamp down on the other party....”

“Wha, what are you saying!!”

“Hahaha! You’re embarrassed already!”

Even if the air was cold, Chiho’s red hot cheeks would not cool down. She spent a very long time afterwards doing her best to explain the situation.

After a trip of around five minutes, the lightweight lorry and station wagon reached the greenhouse where Maou and the rest were visiting the day before.

“Hey, time to wake up. We’re starting work soon.”

During the trip, none of the five people made a sound. Hinako, who was driving the station wagon simply thought that everyone was drowsy and made the effort to tap all their shoulders and tried to drive up their morale with a cheerful voice.

Of course the reason why Maou and Emi did not utter a word was not because of reasons such as wanting to sleep. It was because when they were pushing their way into the car, due to the position they were at, Maou and Emi ended up sitting together. Ashiya, Urushihara and Suzuno, who sensed the tension, had no choice but to be silent.

“Then, everyone just take this.”

Hinako took some garden shears from the boot of the station wagon and handed them to everyone.

“Are you all ready?”

At this time, even Kazuma walked over and looked around at Maou and the rest in sequence.

And Manji was unfolding and stacking folded plastic boxes in from of the polyethylene tent.

“Basically, what we’re going to do for the earlier part of the day is to pick eggplants and cucumbers.”

“Eh? The cucumbers as well?”

HInako asked in surprise. Kazuma nodded his head and replied,

“In the end, we have no choice but to pick them. Or else they’ll be worth nothing.”

The young couple who are working at the frontlines of the Sasaki family, had very stern words mixed into their conversation.

“Just like I said yesterday...Ah, Even though Yusa-san and Kamazuki-san just arrived here, I request that everyone make haste and harvest the crops. So, come with me right now.”

Under Kazuma’s urging, the demons, Hero and inquisitor walked one after the other into the polyethylene tent.

“Woah~”

They did not come in yesterday, so Maou, who had never been into the greenhouse before, could not help but let out a sound of amazement.

Inside the white ethylene tent, the soil which had neat lines had rows of countless egg plants growing on it.

“Where’s the wind coming from?”

Ashiya seemed to have noticed something and he raised his head to look at the roof. What he saw was a giant ventilating fan spinning.

Definitely, if one was observant, they will be able to discover it. There was no wind at all outside yet there was a cool wind moving around in the greenhouses.

“You will understand when you walk to the other end of the field. The roof of this greenhouse is not completely level. There is a bit of difference in height. Due to the differences in air pressure as well as the addition of a ventilation fan, there is good ventilation here. So we’re able to control the temperature as well as reduce the humidity so the plants won’t fall sick so easily.”

“Eh, you guys actually thought of making use of such a thing. But, where does the energy come from?”

Emi raised her question while thinking back to the surroundings of the greenhouse.

The appearance of the ventilation fan did not look any much different from the kind used at home. It’s probably powered by electricity as well.

But she did not remember seeing any power generator or anything like that in the vicinity.

“Ah, even though it’s not here, if you walk up ahead, the land there has some solar panels erected. The electricity from this part of the mountain is all supplied from there.

“Solar panels?!”

The unexpected answer shocked the entire crew.

“Well, if you’re interested, I could bring you all there later. But the harvest in front of us is more important, we can talk about that later.”

Kazuma was happy to see the shocked expressions of Maou and the rest but he quickly reverted back to his stern look and he waved his hand to make around gather near one of the eggplants.

Kazuma was holding onto a moderately large eggplant and the eggplant stem was still connected to the branch.

“The content of the job is very easy. Just find those eggplants that are about this big or larger and cut them from the stem like such. Don’t bother about those that are smaller.”

Kazuma spoke while using the scissors, with a “kachaa” sound, to cut the eggplant off together with the stalk.

Now it looked almost like the kind Maou and the rest usually see at the supermarket.

“Just put the eggplants in the yellow boxes my dad set up just now. When the boxes are full, push them to the truck outside then get another empty box from the front of the greenhouse and continue to fill it up. I guess it would be better if you get something to serve as a sample.....”

Kazuma plucked another five eggplants that were ready for harvest and passed it to the five people.

“Sorry about that, today’s workload is very big. Everyone will work in different groups. Hopefully we can finish all the greenhouses as soon as possible.”

After passing the sample eggplants to all the respective people, Kazuma quickly glanced at the five people and asked,

“Yusa-san, have you ever planted eggplants before?”

“Yes, I have.”

Emi replied while nodding her head confidently.

It was time to split up into groups. Kazuma confirmed with Emi about her experience level. At that time, Maou had this overwhelming bad feeling that something was going to happen.

“So, I’ll leave this greenhouse to Ashiya-san. My dad is there too. So if you’re unsure of anything, you can consult him.”

“I understand.”

“Hey~then you can start from here and we’ll go down in order.”

Ashiya, who was allocated a group, was called by Manji who had started working. He carried his own box and went to the other end.

“Kamazuki-san will go to the neighbouring greenhouse with Hinako.”

“I understand. Hinako-dono, please take care of me.”

Suzuno nodded in a straight-forward manner and she bowed towards Hinako.

It was not known where Suzuno actually got it from, but she had a deep red band, which looked like something out of a tourist exhibit about tea plucking and the agricultural lifestyle, obviously wrapped around the sleeves of a kimono that seemed to be made for farming.

“Urushihara-san will come with me to the greenhouse on the opposite side.”

“...ok.”

Urushihara was in the same group as Kazuma who looked to be the most capable. Although his expression was stiff, at the very least, he nodded in agreement.

If he was in the same group as Maou or as Ashiya, he will probably escape their field of vision and slack off. However, if the other party was Kazuma, then he had no way to do such a thing.

And so what's left was inevitable--

“Maou-san and Yusa-san will be in the same group, just go to the greenhouse next to the one Hinako and Suzuno-san are in. If there's anything you don't know, sorry but I'll have to trouble you to either come here or go over to Hinako to ask. Well, let's start!”

“Yes.....”

“.....Yes.”

Maou and Emi's listless replies were brushed off with Kazuma's energetic words.

“That hurts!”

The eggplant's thorns went through the work gloves and pricked Maou's finger and he cried out in pain.

“.....Ah—Yeowch...I got poked.”

The only sounds heard inside the polyethylene tent was the sound of the ventilator spinning, Maou's mumbling as well as the sounds of Emi wordlessly cutting the eggplants off and throwing them in the box.

At that moment, Maou spotted Emi's head over at the other side of the ridge, through the gaps between the branches.

“There are thorns on the stems of the eggplants, don't you even know something like that!? Because you always push the housework to Alsiel, that's why you end up with this kind of problem!

If it was as per usual, Emi would have probably started talking incessantly and saying detestable words. But at the moment, no matter what Maou said or did, Emi had no reaction.

Only once, when Maou was hesitating on whether to pick an eggplant which was a bit smaller than the sample, a phrase of suggestion was suddenly shot over from the other side of the ridge.

“Cut it off, or it would be too late tomorrow.”

Until now, when he was alone with Emi, obviously they would not be chatting harmoniously but Emi had never been so silent like the current moment to the point that it made him uncomfortable.

Originally, Maou did belittle the harvesting job.

Even though he was thoroughly startled by the vastness of the field, in the greenhouse, the area of the ridge where things were planted was not as large as the former.

Also, he heard that there was no need to harvest all the eggplants so it was possible to complete the task within two hours with their current manpower. He really thought it was nothing much.

But when he started operating in reality, the half of one ridge was not even harvested yet and one plastic box was almost filled to the brim.

One greenhouse had three ridges--with Emi, never mind the fact that the two of them were harvesting the eggplants from different sides of the same ridge--just by some rough estimation, they will probably collect around twelve boxes of eggplants from one greenhouse.

Furthermore, eggplants were different from fruits such as apples. They don't grow in especially high places.

The height of the eggplant tree was about Maou's height and the fruit grew behind the leaves in the lower area.

As he had to force himself to repeatedly and mechanically bend over, cut, stand up, bend over again, cut and stand up once more, Maou quickly felt that his physical strength was weak.

Just to mention, Maou was even worried if Urushihara, who was with Kazuma, would collapse in the middle.

“...Ugh, sweat got in my eyes....”

Just as Maou bent over and lowered his head to settle the next bunch of egg plants, the beads of sweat on his forehead dripped into his eyes causing him to blink non-stop.

Even though he wanted to rub it, whether it was his work gloves or his hands under the gloves, they were all covered in soil.

“Towel.”

“Ah? Oh!”

Bearing with the pain and opening his eyes slightly, he only saw that Emi’s hand had went through the eggplant tree’s branches to deliver a towel.

“Can, can I use it?”

“It’s not mine anyway. Because I didn’t bring any towel so I borrowed it from Hinako-san. If you stop working because of trivial things such as sweat going into the eye, then we cannot finish the job.”

“Ah, like that.....sorry.”

Removing the mud covered gloves, Maou took the old towel, which had the name of a fruit store on it and was washed to the point that it was very white, and he wiped the area around his eyes.

“You can take it. I have my own. Even if you wrap it around your forehead, the sweat will still flow down. Just put it around your neck and stuff it down your collar.”

“Ah, ok....”

Maou followed what the other party said and hung the towel around his neck. After which, he stuffed the hanging ends into the collar of his shirt.

Definitely, by doing this, he could wipe his face immediately once he starts sweating. Even if he lowered his head and bent over, the two ends will not hang down and interfere with his work.

“Didn’t Chiho’s mother tell all of you to bring extra towels?”

“.....we did bring it, but we forgot as it was too rushed this morning.”

It was approximately an hour since they were here and the two finally have a conversation that could be counted as a conversation.

There was some underlying ridicule in Emi's tone. This was something that occurs quite often and Maou decided to put that point aside first.

“I thought it would be quite cooling but I never expected that I will actually be sweating so much.”

They were originally in a place that was of a high altitude, also the sun has not risen completely plus there was ventilation in the greenhouse. It was not hot at all but yet he was in this state.

“That useless angel, he's probably not going to make it.”

“That's the most worrying part.”

As expected, Emi does not seem to have faith in Urushihara's physical strength

“You say that it's cooling....do you know why harvesting has to be done so early in the morning?”

“Eh?”

Unlike Maou who was hesitating and working with pauses in between, Emi quickly and smoothly continued the task.

The rhythmic and orderly sound of the scissors clearly showed the difference in speed. In order not to lose to Emi, Maou received the conversation while frantically searching for the next eggplant.

“When it comes to harvesting summer’s crops, the most basic thing is that they must be picked at dawn.”

“Picked at dawn?”

“When plants are exposed to the sun, they start to grow. You should at least know this point right?”

“Yeah.”

“The stem will grow from the roots and then from the stems, there will be leaves and flowers and fruits. After that, the flowers and fruits will form seeds and grow. For such a thing, they would need sufficient moisture, humidity, temperature as well as sunlight. So when there’s no sunlight, what do you think will happen to the fruits?”

“When there’s no sunlight?.....”

Maou looked at the eggplant that coincidentally got held in his hand and thought about the meaning behind Emi's question.

When there was no sunlight, that would mean evening, night as well as the dawn, just like how it was now.

“Your hands stopped.”

“Ah, oh no, sorry.”

Realising that the sound of Maou's scissors have stopped, Emi reminded him.

“...as there's no sunlight at night, the temperature will drop, so in the order not to freeze to death, the vegetables will store up the nutrients within themselves.”

“Store up nutrients?”

“That's right, such as sugar, starch and vitamins, things like that Simply put, it's the same delicious kind that's good for the body, all these are stored at night for backup.”

“Oh, I see. In other words, when they get harvested in the morning, then they would be at the state where their nutrients are the maximum, is that right?”

“That’s how it is.”

“However, if it takes too long, the sun will rise and it would become brighter. The temperature will also go up. After that so what? What difference does it make harvesting at that time and now?”

“After listening to what is said just now, you still don’t understand?”

There was some surprise in Emi’s tone.

“When the temperature rises and they get sunlight, the vegetables will start using the stored nutrients and grow.”

“Grow?”

“The plants will grow using sunlight and the nutrients they stored up at night. Vegetables are alive too. No matter what species, all their actions are for leaving behind offspring. So even if it’s in the same day, from the same field, from the same plant, the fruits that are harvested will having a startlingly difference if you pluck them in the morning or if you plunk them in the afternoon. Even though it’s not the harvesting season now, the difference is the most obvious in corn and the related species.”

“Ha.....I see. That’s why we have to wake up so early. In the end, it would become hotter around eight o’clock.”

“It also does not mean that after a certain time, the taste will suddenly become terrible. But since there’s still cucumbers in the neighbouring greenhouses that need to be harvested, then we should at least be finished with the eggplants by eight thirty.”

After hearing Emi’s words, Maou took out his phone from his pocket and looked at the clock.

If it was exactly as Emi said and they need to be done by eight thirty, then whether the remaining two hours was sufficient was also a problem.

“Do, do we have enough time?”

“Who knows?”

Emi answered in a nonchalant manner.

After which, Maou suddenly thought about something else and he opened his mouth to ask again.

“According to what you said just now, even if we don’t finish harvesting today, can’t we just continue harvesting tomorrow morning?”

Kazuma also said to ignore the eggplants that were too small.

Even if he said that, it should not be the case that they will just ignore them completely. It was unknown how many times they have to do the harvesting before it can be considered complete.

Just as Maou was thinking as such.

“Ha~.....”

A sigh which completely treated Maou as an idiot drifted over from the other side of the eggplant branches.

“Wha, what?!”

“.....this.”

Just like just now, Emi’s arm went through the gaps between the branches, but she was not holding a towel in her hand this time.

“Wha.....what is this atrocity?”

It was a gigantic eggplant which Maou had never seen before.

The body of the eggplant was the thickness of a one liter carton of milk and it was bloated as though it would split open any time.

“I said it before, vegetables will grow.”

“Gr, grow?”

“When we talk about vegetables ready for harvest, for the vegetables themselves, this is also the best period for them to grow. From this time onward, the fruits will start developing seeds to pass on to the next generation.”

Maou unthinkingly accepted the large eggplant.

The texture of the eggplant definitely felt firm to the touch however something did not match its appearance. The eggplant was not as heavy as he thought.

Also, compared to the normal sized eggplants he picked until now, the surface of the skin was obviously duller.

“For these vegetables harvested today, if we left them in the summer sun and temperature for one more day, it would probably grow rapidly to this state in less than one or two days. Have you ever seen such a large eggplant in the supermarket?”

“.....not at all. Then, then just now when Kazuma-san said “worthless”, it was referring to this?”

“He’s probably referring to the cucumbers which are overgrown. Even though I have never seen it before, but if you miss the correct timing of vegetables from the melon family, they will grow to an unbelievable size.”

Maou had only seen the normal sized vegetables sold at the supermarket before, therefore this large eggplant gave him quite a huge shock. He was even more unable to imagine how large the worthless cucumber was going to be.

“If it becomes so large, it would not meet the standards of typical merchandise and the inside will be bone dry. Of course, the parts that make it delicious would be lost as well. And no one would be willing to sell vegetables that are uneven in size. After all, even in Ente Isla, you can only get chump change if you sell these vegetables that have passed their harvesting period.”

After hearing these words, Maou subconsciously glanced at the box full of countless eggplants next to his feet.

“It’s like that even in Ente Isla, what more in Japan. If we go according to the number we harvested, how much loss would we have if we waited a day longer?”

“....eh, let me calculate that.”

Even though the price of vegetables went up this summer, Maou decided to temporarily assume that the retail price of the eggplants would be fifty yen per piece.

After assuming that the retail price was fifty yen, then assuming the wholesale price was half of it, it would be twenty five yen.

In this hour, just Maou's share alone, even if you estimate it conservatively, it would be at least two hundred pieces.

If Emi was the same, the just half a ridge would be four hundred pieces. If it was the same for the rest of the ridges, then just Maou's and Emi's greenhouse alone would yield about two thousand and four hundred eggplants.

And then, there are ten greenhouses altogether. Just with a straightforward calculation, twenty four thousand eggplants will be harvested just today.

“Assuming that the retail price is fifty yen and the wholesale price is twenty five yen, the loss will probably be around six hundred thousand yen, I guess.”

“Are you a moron?!”

Just as Maou used the strategy of estimating a loss of six hundred thousand yen based on the number of eggplants, Emi kicked away the conclusion as though spitting.

“Eh? Did I calculate it wrong?”

“The eggplant’s seeds and seedlings, do you think these things spring out from the ground for free like spring water?!”

“.....Oh right.”

Maou accepted the other party’s words and nodded.

“And there are still other expenditures right?”

“That’s right. money to buy these eggplant seeds or seedlings, maintenance fees for these greenhouses, fuel costs for the machines used to plough the soil, fertiliser and even labour fees for taking care of the plants. When the stocks get delivered, there’s also material fees for the cardboard boxes. The other expenses used up in order to get this income of six hundred thousand yen will also come to naught in a snap. Do you think it’s just a trivial matter of losing six hundred yen? Harvesting late will result in very dire consequences.”

Around the large eggplant, there were signs of harvest from a few days ago. Even though the spineless employees ran away, Kazuma-san, Manji-san and the rest or even those originally employed personnel must taken the window of opportunity to work hard in harvesting the crops. However, the end result was that there was still not enough people and a portion of the eggplants grew to such a state.

The only way Maou could react at that moment was to let out a groan.

Once again, he realised how large the Sasaki household actually was.

Since Riho said before that almost the whole mountain was their property, then other than the eggplants, cucumbers and watermelons that Maou and the rest saw, there should be other various crops.

Even though Manji mentioned that he will hire workers from elsewhere, but until now, Maou and the rest only met the Sasaki family members.

It was overdoing it to just depend on such small numbers.

Perhaps, other than the family members, there were actually no other workers.

That's why they actually hired interns from various agencies to complete such tasks that even newbies like Maou and the rest could do.

However, since they ran away, the Sasaki family ended up missing the best harvesting period.

“.....It's really not easy.”

Maou mumbled one sentence.

It was already a laborious and toiling task just harvesting crops with a pair of scissors.

Even though Maou calculated that there will be a wholesale price of six hundred thousand yen and it seemed to be a huge sum based on his own daily life, considering the expenses and the labour involved, the returns were not a large number at all.

“.....yeah, it’s really not easy.”

“Ah.....”

In this short time when Maou started thinking deeply, Emi’s voice has become further.

Emi, who was familiar with the task, had already increased the distance between the both of them.

Maou began to start work again in a flustered manner.

He kept having a strong urge to take a peek at Emi’s expression.

Emi had such rich knowledge about agriculture. Even if he did not remember the conversation he had with Chiho last night, it was not difficult to guess that it was due to her personal experience.

Emi was originally from a farming family and the one who destroyed her agricultural lifestyle was none other than Maou himself.

And for Maou to lament about how tough agricultural life was based on Emi's words, no doubt he would end up pushing her buttons.

Once angered, Emi will always unsheathe her holy sword and dash over with a vengeance. That was the only thing Maou did not dare to mention in front of her -- Maou was panicking over his own loss of words.

“What is it?”

Perhaps Emi also noticed Maou's hesitation and unease, she stopped what she was doing and asked.

As she was standing on the other side of the ridge, it was hard to tell what kind of expression she had on her face.

However, at the very least, from the tone of her voice, no anger could be heard.

“Even though I feel that it’s unlikely.”

“Oh, ohh.”

“You can’t be thinking of reflecting or something like that right? Please don’t do that.”

“Eh? Ah, that...”

Maou fell into confusion.

What was Emi trying to say?

Was it “don’t reflect”? But, if he thought about what he heard from Chiho and Suzuno, Emi could not possibly be happy about Maou going to do agricultural work.

If Maou was to say such ignorant things in front of Emi, there was no way that she was not angry and even less likely to say things such as “don’t reflect”.

“When you say reflect, you mean....”

“I’m referring to when you destroyed my hometown as well as my father’s farm.”

“....”

Maou could not utter a word.

He never thought that the other party would be so direct.

“Let me make it clear, regarding that issue, I have no intention of getting rid of my anger nor do I intend to forgive any of you. Just thinking of it makes me want to kill off you and Lucifer.”

Probably because it was just the two of them, Emi said her words without thinking.

“However, if you decide to regret and reflect on what you have done, the vengeance that I feel would waver-- even though the extent will only be the size of a flea’s droppings. So I will not listen to you reflect.”

“.....Ha?”

“For you people at that time, you probably felt that all you did was as trivial as kicking away a small stone that was in your way. Perhaps you didn’t even feel that it was to the level of a small stone, maybe you even had a reason for kicking it away. However, the small stone that was kicked away was the most important thing in the world to me. So, sooner or later, I will repay this debt. Just remember this point.”

The sound of Emi's scissors stopped for a short while and then it very quickly started making noise again.

“But this is a problem between you and me. It has nothing to do with you guys helping the Sasaki family out in their farming activities. So just treat it as something like that. So you have no need to be suspicious of me, work seriously. I will not do anything underhanded to interfere with your work.”

Emi said while moving to the other end of the ridge.

Maou who was so startled that he did not even dare to breathe deeply finally breathed a sigh of relief. His tensed shoulders were finally relaxed as well.

“.....How should I put it.....”

“What is it?”

“You are one troublesome person.”

Even though he was complaining about it, Maou had a smile on his face instead.

“Hah? Don't tell me you rather me say things like “I won't forgive you”, tear you into pieces and turn you into fertiliser for this field?”

Even though such terrifying words were said, there was some joking tone within the words. This should not be an illusion.

Blocked by the leaves and branches of the eggplants, there was no way to know what expression his arch enemy, the hero, had on her face.

“It’s delicious! It’s too delicious!!”

Just like yesterday, the sky was blue and clear and Maou’s voice, loud enough to the point of shouting, resounded across the Sasaki’s family fields.

“Hey, don’t yell all of a sudden!”

Emi who was sitting next to him, covered her ears and frowned once she heard this voice.

The sun was shining on the earth and the temperature had gone up. Now it was eleven in the morning.

Finally, they were finished with the harvesting of the cucumbers for today. Hinako took out some homemade miso and seasonings and sat with Maou and the rest to eat the cucumbers they had harvested.

Not only were the cucumbers delivered straight from the source, they were also eaten at the source. These cucumbers were as delicious as fruits; The homemade miso provided the electrolytes lost from the intense perspiration.

Influenced by Hinako who was ate the cucumbers without hesitation, Maou and the rest who were praising the taste from the start started eating the fresh cucumbers as though they were eating bananas.

“Hey, you can eat to the point of getting a stomachache for all I care but it’s almost time for lunch, isn’t it?”

Seeing that Maou was reaching out to a third cucumber, Emi reminded him without thinking.

“Even if you say that.....if I don’t eat delicious food now, then when shall I wait until.”

The salty taste of the miso had amazing synergy with the sweetness of the cucumber. When cold tea was drunk as well, it feels as though there was nothing better than this.

“Even so, you should still control yourself! Yumiko spent some effort preparing lunch, what are you going to do if you can’t finish it?”

“You’re not allowed to waste food other people made for you.”

“No matter what you decide to do, anything you decide to do, do not leave any leftovers in front of Alas=Ramus.”

Emi kept her eyes on Maou who continued to eat the cucumber.

Suzuno and Ashiya looked at the two in bewilderment.

“.....I have this feeling.....”

“That it’s not much different from usual.”

Ashiya also detected that Emi was acting unusual since yesterday.

Even though he did not hear anything from Maou, Chiho or even Suzuno, he felt that Emi was unhappy about them doing agricultural work.

However, Emi and Maou who came out of the eggplant greenhouse were completely back to their usual selves.

It was not as though they got along, it was the daily normal state where whenever Maou wanted to do something, Emi would be close behind.

“Kamazuki, what happened to Yusa?”

“I’m not sure either.”

It was impossible for Suzuno who was working with Hinako all this time to know.

One can only say that Emi who was unhappy about Maou and the rest working at the farm used some method to recollect her emotions.

No matter what, even though it was unclear what happened, it seems like even with the Sasaki family home as the stage, the two have returned to their usual level of animosity. Suzuno was relieved by that.

“Ah, you worked hard, you worked hard. You can take a nap when we go back.”

“Ughh....”

Behind the four who were sitting side by side, Hinako was fanning Urushihara who was in the total state of collapse and he stayed in that state until they reached home.

In front of Kazuma, Urushihara was not allowed to slack off at all.

Even though Urushihara was completely out of energy as he was not used to laborious work, he still held on until all the cucumbers were harvested.

“Nap?”

And then Maou who was on his fourth cucumber ask Hinako.

“We can take a nap?”

Maou thought it was unusual to have a nap during the time they should work. Napping was something only royalty or people in Europe do.

“If we don’t sleep, our bodies won’t be able to take it.”

Hinako replied with a wry smile.

“The weather is so hot, so let’s rest for about two hours after finishing lunch. Also, thanks to everyone, we are done with harvesting the eggplants and cucumbers. I guess there’s only cutting the grass today. Sending the stocks and packing will be left to people who are used to the job. I think Kazuma and Father will say something if something bad happens. Tomorrow, we’ll probably cut off all the eggplants in the greenhouse and after that, we’ll be left with pruning them again.”

“Pruning them, what for?”

The one who answered Ashiya's questions was not Hinako, but Emi.

“Even though eggplants are pretty much summer vegetables but there are also autumn eggplants. So after harvesting the eggplants from those trees, the extra branches and leaves need to be cut off in order to get the autumn eggplants.”

“Ohh! Correct!”

Hinako clapped her hands.

“But shouldn't pruning be something that is done before the height of summer?”

“Because they are grown in the greenhouse, so we can adjust a bit in this area.”

“I see....one more thing in my list to add....”

“Hey, control yourself.”

Though she was the Hero, Emi seems to be thinking of something impure and Maou softly reminded her to hold back.

She probably wanted to put up some plastic tents in Ente Isla to grow vegetables.

“Speaking of which, Yusa-san’s family also handles agriculture right? Do you mind telling me where? What do you grow?”

However, the Hero who intended to make use of the tactic of the different cultures between Ente Isla and Earth to a large extent was interrupted by Hinako’s innocent questioning.

“Ah, that. Uh, let me think about it. It’s um...not within this country. We always been planting wheat....”

Emi’s smile was frozen and somewhat dark. At that moment, her brain’s gears were running at full speed and she managed to overcome the first hurdle.

“Growing wheat overseas?! Do you need to do any swathing for the wheat overseas?! When you’re not growing the wheat, what resting crops do you grow to let the soil regain its fertility?!”

Emi was pressurised by Hinako’s passionate eyes and she became speechless.

“Right now the amount of wheat grown locally has increased, we really need it! You see, after the alcohol tax law was changed, the amount of beer entering the market decreased and now there’s a spread of products to replace

the third type of beer right? Now all kinds of breweries are trying to get into the market are looking for wheat and beer flowers! Rice is not very valuable lately but we end with too much every year, how troublesome! So the rage is indeed locally grown wheat right?!”

“Hi, Hinako-san, my family does grow wheat but I’m not too sure about the details....”

Emi tried hard to dodge Hinako’s burning questions while Maou who was beside her thought hard about the conversation.

“Swat-wha, fertility what, what are you talking about?”

“If it’s about this, I know what they’re talking about. Swathing is referring to wrapping and fertility refers to the fertile plants that will restore the vitality of the soil when no crops are being grown. I heard that it was some kind of lotus or clover, plants like those.”

“I’m sorry. Even though this is a rare moment where you are trying to explain things to me but I do not know what you are talking about at all.”

The explanation barely tickled his ears and Maou glared at Suzuno hard.

Next to them, Emi was still trying to avoid Hinako’s questions, at this time---

“Hey! Sorry for making you guys wait! Let’s go back for lunch!”

After Manji and Kazuma moved the harvested eggplants and cucumbers to some other place, they brought the pushcarts and the lightweight truck back.

And so the conversation was interrupted. Just as Emi was feeling more relaxed--

“We’ll continue the conversation when we get back!”

Hinako declared as such and Emi’s face stiffened.

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“But is it really alright like this....”

“Ah?”

Ashiya let out a voice of unease and Maou felt confused about it.

The three demons who have returned to their rooms are lying on the tatami mats in their favoured positions and sleeping as the cool wind blew across.

“Sure we have to wake up early and the labour involved is quite heavy, but.....”

“Yep. That’s true. I can’t stay relaxed about this. They even let us have such delicious food as well as nap for three hours and things like that.”

“And we still get daily income as well. I keep feeling that we’re going to have bad karma.”

“What kind of demons cares about getting bad karma?”

“I already feel like sleeping for the rest of my life.....”

Urushihara stayed near the window by himself and all the way from the farm until here, he kept weakly fanning his face and saying words about death. Maou and Ashiya were not listening to his words.

“The frustrating part is, at this time, there’s isn’t anything that we can do. In reality, did that Emi just rush out?”

“That is infuriating and it’s also starting to make me feel uneasy.”

Ashiya sat up and wrapped his arms around his head.

In the end, Emi was unable to escape from the conversation with Hinako about wheat.

Emi also gave up and made a disclaimer that she only helped to plant wheats when she was a child. She will only tell Manji and Hinako what was done if it was within her understanding.

Emi's hometown was an overhead land in Europe so it does not have many species of wheat in the first place. She could not say much without making it sound unnatural but Hinako was still listening intently.

Because they looked up to that knowledge and experience so Emi was brought by Hinako and Kazuma to the water field where they plan to plant crops for a look.

“It's pointless to be competitive for this kind of thing, rather than doing something wrong with to prove your determination, why not just listen to the employee and frankly rest.”

“Mumumu.....”

Ashiya does not seem to be relieved by those words and was unable to calm down and he even started shaking subconsciously.

“That's it!”

“.....Ashiya, you were definitely thinking of unnecessary things just now.....I don't like it ok, I'm not going.”

Ashiya suddenly clapped his hands and raised his head.

Before Ashiya could say anything, Urushihara decided to say some weak words first.

“I don't care if this creates some difference in income, have a safe trip.”

And then he climbed into the cabinet and closed the sliding door behind him.

“I rather say, based on what Ashiya wants to say, once I think that there will be no difference between the daily income of you and I, I will become uneasy.....so what is it that you wanted to say, Ashiya.”

Maou said such bitter words but at this time, no matter where he dragged Urushihara to, he would just be a hindrance.

“Because it's been a while since we did regular work, so we forgot about this point. Demon King-sama, we have to find work ourselves. Emilia and Bell both flexibly used their strong points, even though they were arrogant, they still found the tasks they could do, right?”

It was true, in the morning, Suzuno was cruising around the kitchen naturally. It was a scene beyond imagination. Emi also showed that she was able to contribute more to the Sasaki household compared to Maou.

“So for us as well as Lucifer who is the main negative element here, we should apply for the job ourselves and it’s a bit better if we show we care right?”

“No matter what you say, I am definitely not going!”

There was a sound of protest from the cabinet.

“.....that does make sense. Even though we don’t know what we can do, I do not want to come here from a home where we have absolutely nothing and make it even more meaningless by having nothing to do even after we taken a trip.”

Maou also sat up and then stood up after hammering his knees.

“Even if you say so, but Kazuma-san, Hinako-san and Manji-san aren’t around right now. Let’s ask Yumiko-san and Granny Ei if there’s any job that we can do.”

“If there isn’t, then we’ll just clean the surroundings.”

Maou and Ashiya talked as they left the room and went downstairs.

After a while, no one was in the room --

“They really went.”

Even though Urushihara himself declared that he would not go, he felt a bit lonely being left alone like that. So he came out from the cabinet.

“In times like these, the internet is your only savior.”

Urushihara open the luggage trunk which contained enough luggage for three and took out the laptop that he usually used.

Once he switched it on, he was lucky to pick up a free-to-access wireless and connected to the internet successfully.

“I really respect you both for wanting to move even when you worked so much...well, it’s part of the job if you rest when you are supposed to, right?”

Urushihara felt the light cool wind blowing across the sky of Komagane city while immersing himself as usual in the wind of the internet.

Under the large window filled with the vast scene of the Southern Alps and looking at the small windows filled with electric photos.

※

“Oh-----!”

“...Ugu.”

In the mountains of Komagane city, the leisurely yell as well the groan that followed like approaching some philosophy.

“Sky! Chesed!”

“Ze-ed”

“Chesed!”

“Che...ped”

“Chesed-----!”

“No matter what, it’s a little bit too tough to let Alas=Ramus say the names of Sephira.”

On Maou’s shoulders was his small beloved daughter, and ---

“Wh, why does Hitoshi-kun have to use actions to express his understanding and not words, agh, that hurts!”

She was actually prepared to teach Hitoshi, who was on Ashiya’s shoulders, some nonsensical words but he used a philosophical expression to listen to her words. It really made people laugh dryly.

“Hitoshi-kun is amazing! He can already say such things!”

At the side, Chiho, who was putting diapers, wet tissues, towels, rehydration fluids and other baby care tools into a large handbag, saw the two and started laughing.

“Sa, Sasaki-san, wh, why does Hitoshi-kun keep yanking on my hair like this, agh, ouch, ouch, ouch!”

“Hitoshi-kun seems to like to grab things to pull lately.”

“Se, seems like it, hey! Hitoshi-kun, be more gentle....”

“Because Hitoshi-kun’s hands are small, rather than grabbing the head, it’s more convenient to grab the hair.”

Maou smiled and looked at Hitoshi-kun who was quietly using both his hands to yank Ashiya's hair.

This was the new job given to Maou and Ashiya who recommended themselves.

And it actually was babysitting.

Kazuma, Hinako and Manji all went to work. It was supposed to be Chiho, Yumiko and Granny Ei who would take turns to take care of Hitoshi and Alas=Ramus just like they did in the morning, but Yumiko and Ei seemed to have work in the afternoon. So it seems like Maou's request helped them a lot.

“He's been making a ruckus about wanting to see his mommy, sorry, Maou-san, Ashiya-san, could you both take a walk and bring Hitoshi to where Hinako is? Granny and I need to go to the fruit selection factory later.”

“Once he sees his mother's face, I guess he would calm down a bit. Kazuma and Hinako went to the fields on the west side.”

“Fields on the west side?”

After the short experience with various things around the Sasaki household, they understood that this family will describe the location of a place by using directional words like ‘above’, ‘below’, ‘West’ and so on.

It was not a problem if this was said to the relatives, but in a place where even the concept of “neighbouring” was vastly different from that of the city, if they only depended on such information, they will, without a doubt, get lost.

“Ah, does Chiho know? If Chiho doesn’t know then I will bring all of you there.”

Yumiko understood what Maou was trying to imply and she turned to Chiho to talk.

“About that, I remember that we have to cross the river and then follow the edge of the grove and then go right and it should be up ahead?”

Chiho searched her memories and answered.

And just now, the noun ‘river’ appeared in the conversation, was it possible that the land of this family had a river flowing across it?

“Yes, it’s there. Sorry, Chiho, but could you bring Maou-san and the rest of them there? It’s not that far, so just go there and come back immediately.

So Maou and Ashiya accepted the request. With Chiho leading the way, they brought Hitoshi to the ‘fields at the west side’ where Hinako was at to meet her.

Emi was over there so they could not leave Alas=Ramus behind. Therefore, in order to pay a visit to the mother, Maou, Ashiya, Chiho, Alas=Ramus and Hitoshi formed a small team and took a walk down the summer’s mountain path.

“Ah, it’s really amazing. When you say the air is delicious, it’s referring to this I guess.”

Maou said this as he gazed at the blue sky and the Southern Alps from the mountain path.

Needless to say, the sun’s rays were strong and the temperature was high but the fresh air also cooled them off.

“Alas=Ramus, is it hot?”

“No! Hi-kun, Hi-kun’s hat, straw hat, one pair!”

“...Uu”

In the span of half a day, Alas=Ramus had completely gotten along with Hitoshi.

On the way here, she made a lot of effort to talk to Hitoshi (but Hitoshi could only reply with an “Uu” .)

Even though the shape was different, both were wearing straw hats and both children seemed to be very happy. Hitoshi was also preoccupied with looking at Alas=Ramus and as though imitating her, he also grabbed the edges of his hat.

Then Alas=Ramus turned the Rilakkuma embroidery (Probably Emi’s interest) that was on her ribbon towards Hitoshi and puffed up her cheeks like she was showing off.

Hitoshi himself was unable to differentiate the feeling of good or bad so he seriously looked at Rilakkuma’s happy expression.

“Alas=Ramus, Nee-chan wants to look at it too.”

“Nee-chan! Hi-nee-chan!”

“Alas=Ramus, it’s not correct to say it like that. If you say it as such then Hitoshi-kun becomes a nee-chan.”

“Alas=Ramus, nee-chan?”

“Um, it’s like that in a way, but to say that about yourself is a bit...”

“Nee-chan! Alas=Ramus nee-chan! Always nee-chan!”

“Uh, whatever you say.”

“Ah, that hurts! You pulled it really hard just now....”

“Hahahaha!”

Even though she should feel sorry for Ashiya, even someone like Chiho could not help but laugh at this scene.

“It feels like Ashiya is a robot that’s being controlled by Hitoshi-kun”

“Because Urushihara holed himself in the room, I feel relieved now....”

Definitely, if Urushihara saw Ashiya in this state, he would probably treat it as a joke and laugh till he falls over.

“About Urushihara-san, is he alright? Kazuma-nii chan was quite worried.”

Chiho asked as such as she only saw Urushihara at the dinner table this day.

“Although he looks tired, he won’t die, probably. Perhaps he’s taking the opportunity to surf the net during our break time?”

“Speaking of which, Sasaki-san, is the west side fields very far?”

The five people came to the grove which Yumiko told them about before they left the house but they saw no sign of the water field.

Facing Ashiya who looked like he was about to cry due to Hitoshi happily pulling his hair, Chiho gave a forced smile and pointed to the front while digging through her memories.

“Just a bit further, somewhere ahead of this grove is a bridge....ya!”

“Mu!”

At this moment.

A black shadow dashed out from the grove beside them.

Chiho screamed when the unexpected incident happened and Ashiya also stopped dead in his tracks.”

“Wha, what happened?”

Maou, who was a few paces slower due to carrying the heavy load known as Alas=Ramus, was surprised by the two’s appearances.

“No, nothing. It wasn’t anything significant. Just that something rushed out from the grove....”

“It’s, that right?”

Chiho and Ashiya looked at the path of the shadow that went by their feet and Maou tilted his head as he looked at the thing that Chiho was pointing at.

“...That, what is it?”

The thing that looked back at them from the side of the road was a creature which they had never seen before.

It was not a very large animal. It had small beady eyes, a slender face with small ears, a fat and long body with a puffy tail as well as four short limbs that did not seem to match its body and tail.

Its body was far too long for it to be a squirrel.

And it was definitely not a canine or a feline.

“What’s that.....it doesn’t seem to be an especially vicious animal.”

Ashiya said while readjusting Hitoshi’s position on his shoulders. And as though protecting Maou and Chiho, he stepped forward.

Then the mysterious creature became aware of Ashiya’s movements, turned in an agile manner and ran away.

“Even though it’s the first time I’ve seen such a thing, I think it might be a raccoon dog or something like a fox?”

Maou listed the animals that he knew but are rarely seen in the city. Chiho expressed her disagreement.

“I think that.....that’s not raccoon dog. It looks more like a weasel.”

“A weasel huh? I see, it does look something like the photo I saw in a library book last time. Whatever it is, it’s good that nothing serious happened.”

Because of what Ashiya said, the troop that had a bit of a panic just now started moving again.

“Ashiya, what were you doing to actually have to look at photos of weasels in the library.”

Just as they finally spotted something that looked like a water field, Maou asked.

“It’s not anything surprising. I also researched about the raccoon dog, foxes and the kappa.”

Ashiya replied with an extremely serious expression.

Ashiya and Maou did not realise it but the noun “Kappa” suddenly appeared in their conversation and this made Chiho remember the incident where she went out with Maou for a walk last night and she started become embarrassed.

“Shortly after we arrived in Japan, I looked up on giant monsters in Japan.”

“Raccoon dogs, foxes, kappas and things like weasels are all classic creatures involved in Japanese legends of people being bewitched by youkais.”

“Ah, so it’s like that.”

The reason was unexpectedly serious and Maou agreed to it easily.

“There were quite a lot of legends, particularly about the Kappa and weasels being vicious towards humans. So there was a time where I had hopes that they help us bring out demonic magic back.....However...”

“Eh?”

“After coming here, I had this unexpected realisation that the Kappa is well loved by humans and I have given up on that track.”

“Ahhh.....The Kappa”

Ashiya was, after all, conscious about the Kappa Hall.

Detecting what Maou might be thinking about, Ashiya gave a wry smile after that.

“In the end, the Kappa was only a creature of fantasy worlds and from ancient times, the weasel was merely a pest that does not have an aggressive exterior. Really, this country is far too peaceful, it’s so frustrating.”

“.....Yeah. Oh, over there is.....”

“Mama!”

“Uu”

“I see them!”

The children were faster at spotting the people than Maou and the rest. At the road ahead, there was a small river which flowed down from the mountaintop through the grove and there was a stone bridge on top of the river. There was an irrigation channel which directed water from the river into the field.

In the vast green water field where one can look forward to the bountiful autumn harvest were the figures of Emi, Hinako as well as Kazuma.

“That’s probably the masked palm civet I was talking about yesterday.”

“Ahh, that.”

HInako heard the description of the appearance of the mysterious beast from Chiho and Ashiya and she replied while putting Hitoshi on her lap.

“Chiho, how big was that fella?”

“Um.....it suddenly ran out of the grove so I’m not really sure.....about this big I guess?”

Faced with Hinako’s question, Chiho tilted her head and opened her arms in front of herself.

“Uh, it’s quite big. That might mean it had some things to eat?”

“Last year, the place for tomatoes was completely ransacked, such a huge loss. That was really terrible.”

Because the word “loss” was mentioned, after listening to the conversation between the two, Maou could not help but think back to the conversation he had with Emi. How much loss was there, his brain started calculating without much thought.

“It dies pretty fast so once it sees a face it will immediately run away through its tunnels. Last year, a lot of the tomatoes that Hitoshi likes to eat got devoured!”

“Alas=Ramus also likes tomatoes!”

Then, Alas=Ramus who sitting on Maou’s lap voiced out that point.

“Oh, is that so. Hitoshi, did you hear that? Nee-chan likes tomatoes too.”

“Uu.”

“Nee-chan! Hi-kun likes tomatoes too?”

“He really likes them. Other than tomatoes, what else does Alas=Ramus like?”

“Curry!”

“Curry? That’s a bit too early for Hitoshi to eat.”

More accurately, curry was “Mama’s” favourite food. Essentially, to Alas=Ramus, whatever Mama likes, she liked as well.

“Also, corn soup!”

“Hitoshi likes that as well. Let’s make corn soup for dinner then.”

“Un!”

“Soup!”

As expected of Hinako who was used to children, she had quickly captured Alas=Ramus’s heart.

“Speaking of corn soup, I just thought about it. Where did Suzuno go?”

At this moment, Emi walked over, both her hands holding bunches of long grass of a vibrant color.

She was wearing boots, a buttoned shirt and work overalls which were stained with some soil.

“.....what are you doing?”

Before answering Emi’s question, Ashiya question her appearance.

“Plucking barn grass.”

“Barn grass?”

Emi put the grass bundles next to her feet. Looking carefully, there were some ugly grains at the front. Even in a layman’s eyes, they were vastly different from the rice in the water fields.

“They come from seeds that flew here from somewhere and would follow the river’s flow all the way here. They will latch onto the roots of rice plants and grow. We didn’t bring any tools since we weren’t planning to do any weeding here. There wasn’t a lot in the first place so the three of us just pulled them out ourselves.”

“Is it that easy to tell apart from the rest?”

“The color is completely different. Barn grass, unlike rice grains and wheat have a bright yellow green color.”

Emi reached out her arm towards one of the bunches and compared them against the grains in front of their eyes.

Once they were next to each other, it was obvious that the grass that Emi was holding was a bright yellowish-green colour and not the deep green color of the grains.

Just as Chiho was amazed by the stark contrast in color, as though she thought of something, she suddenly raised her head to look at Emi.

“Eh.....Ah, Suzuno-san was preparing dinner.”

“Eh? Is that so?”

The one who was surprised by Chiho’s answer was not Emi, but Maou.

Speaking of which, when they went out, he did not see her in the house at all.

“When Maou-san came down, she was in the kitchen sharpening the kitchen knife.”

“Is she some kind of Onibaba?”

“If she heard you, she’ll probably kill you.”

In a small village up in the mountains, the image of Suzuno wearing a kimono and sharpening her knives in an old mansion, in some way, seemed like an ancient spectacle.

“If I passed the message to her, Maou will probably have no dinner tonight.”

“Papa no dinner!”

Chiho took the centre and in the worst way possible, passed the ball to Emi and Alas=Ramus. Maou felt as though it had turned to the atmosphere of a crazy passing practice.

“Sorry, I take that back and apologise so only that....”

“Ah hahahaha, so Maou-san is unable to raise his head in front of his child.”

Hinako laughed as she looked at Maou who lowered his head due to Emi and Alas=Ramus’s cooperative attack.

“Hinako nee-chan....”

At the side, Chiho pouted and protested softly.

“Yep, I said that on purpose to see Chiho-chan make thhhhaattt kind of expression.”

“Really!”

“Sorry, sorry. Ah, speaking of which, Yusa-san, where’s Kazuma?”

Hinako noticed that Kazuma who was with Emi just before was not around and she looked around herself.

“The irrigation channel below was clogged with garbage so he went to clean it.”

“Garbage?”

“Yes. He said that some of the dams had wood scraps and bark, that kind of thing.”

“Oh I see. What’s going on, we cleaned it just before as well....”

Hinako stood up and looked from the water field in front of her to the lower field's irrigation channel where Kazuma was supposed to be,

The water in the water field was not directly retrieved from the river but was directed here via a hydrant which shared the same upper irrigation channel as other fields in the same area.

If the drainage channel was clogged, it will affect their own field and the upper irrigation channel. So every family will take part earnestly in maintaining the channels.

After that, that gaze moved to where Maou and the rest were and the moment it was near where the river connected to the irrigation channel.

“.....!”

Hinako's expression changed and she sucked her breath anxiously.

“Wha, what is it? Hinako nee-chan.”

Chiho wanted to ask about her acting unusual but she did not get a reply.

“Uu?.....Uu.”

And hugging Hitoshi who she was carrying earlier strongly, she squatted down, her face pale.

“E, e, everyone calm down, don’t make too much noise. Squat down please.”

Hinako’s trembling voice made it clear that there was something unusual around.

“What to do, what should we do, Kazuma.....”

“Hi, Hinako nee-chan, get a grip of yourself, what’s going on!”

Chiho felt the unusualness of Hinako who was hugging Hitoshi and shaking and was about to reach out to her back and get her attention when--

“Chiho-chan, be quiet.”

She had her mouth gagged by Emi.

And like that, she placed her free hand on Chiho’s head and slowly lowered her body.

“What? What’s going on?”

Ashiya and Maou nervously called Chiho and Hinako while lowering themselves. Emi was already crouching and she said the following short sentences in Hinako's direction.

“A bear.”

“Eh.....”

“Ah.....”

“B, bear?”

Maou, Ashiya and Chiho looked through the gaps in the water reeds towards the river in surprise.

Even though they were crouching so their field of vision of impaired and they could not see clearly, there was definitely a black shadow there.

“B, bear, are you referring to that bear?”

It was not known if there were other bears but Emi who nodded in Chiho's direction suddenly hugged Alas=Ramus.

“Yes, that bear.”

And she pointed at the Rilakkuma sewn onto Alas=Ramus's straw hat.

Then, she glanced sideways at Hinako,

“Ah ha.....ahaha”

Even though she was completely frightened, she still had a smile.

“Were you scared?”

“Ah, no, not really. But, thanks. I think I should be a bit tougher myself.”

Emi quick-wittedly made Hinako get away from a panicked state.

“That's good.”

Emi showed a relieved smile and then looking at that figure through the reeds, her face became stern again. After which, she asked Hinako.

“Did bears show up before?”

“I.....I don't know. I never heard Kazuma mentioning anything like this.”

And that moment, after hearing Kazuma being mentioned, all the people glanced at each other.

“Hey, Ashiya, you, go down there to alert Kazuma-san.”

“I understand.”

Ashiya nodded his head sternly and moved while maintaining a crouching position.

“But won’t the bear run once it feels the presence of humans? So mountain climbers will bring bells.....”

“We don’t have a bell.”

Chiho calmly denied Maou and Emi.

“If Hinako-san did not hear about it, it probably came from quite far away?”

“No wonder it’s so thin.”

“If we baited it or something.....but that’s a bit troublesome.”

Looking at the silhouette of the beast, Maou and Emi said the above.

That was definitely a bear.

Because it was walking on all fours, the height could not be confirmed.

Even though it was not as large as expected, it was still large enough.

If Maou stood up, he will probably be taller.

It was covered in dark fur but it seemed to be quite thin.

Attracted by food and thus walked quite a far distance, the possibility of it seeing a lot of humans and attacking them out of fear was not zero.

“If we cannot go back the way we came from, then we should just escape without getting too close to it. Ashiya-san and Kazuma-san can follow at the back. Then we can call the police.”

“That’s the best course of action.”

Hearing Chiho’s suggestion, Emi nodded her head and Maou followed and agreed.

Chiho was far calmer than Hinako and that was because she believed that whether it was a bear or a dinosaur, they were no match for Maou and Emi.

“Chi, Chiho-chan is really amazing. My legs are shaking so much that I can’t even stand properly.”

Hinako, who did not know about that, thought that her husband’s younger cousin was being brave and was stunned.

“It, it’s nothing like that! I’m scared too!”

Realising that her own behavior was strange, Chiho quickly shook her head.

“Then, let’s slowly escape. Maou, I’ll leave Alas=Ramus to you. Chiho-chan, you take Hitoshi-kun. I’ll help Hinako-san.

After Emi gave the order, all of them nodded.

“Ok! Alas=Ramus, sh~! Like that.”

“Ai! Shi~!”

Alas=Ramus covered her own mouth and looked in Papa’s direction with a strong gaze.

“Sor.....sorry, Yusa-san.”

“It’s alright, walk slowly then.”

Emi held onto Hinako who had an apologetic expression on her face and just as Chiho was planning to take Hitoshi from Hinako....

“Eee.....”

Hitoshi who had been obedient until now started throwing a fuss.

The air froze.

“Shh, shh!”

Even though Chiho anxiously tried to console Hitoshi, Hitoshi did not stop crying.

Hitoshi was probably unable to feel that the adults around him were flustered.

But taking him away from his mother’s bosom where he was all along might have made him even more uneasy.

“Hotoshi, Mama is alright. So please be quiet.

Hitoshi, who heard his mother’s sincere plea and wanted his mother while being rocked in Chiho’s arms,

“Uwahhhhhhhhhhhhhhh~!!”

Cried even more aggressively.

In panic, Chiho quickly covered his mouth.

“Oh no! It noticed.”

But it was already too late.

One field away, the bear noticed Hitoshi’s cries and got nearer.

“Please, be more quiet....”

“This, will be troublesome.”

Looking at the approaching bear, Maou frowned.

If it were just a normal bear, once it felt the presence of humans, it should be trying to hide itself or run away.

However, the bear approaching them was opening its wide jaws and gaping and one could almost see it drooling.

“Chi-chan, take Hitoshi-kun and Hinako-san and try to find some way to meet up with Kazuma-san and Ashiya. Leave this to me and Emi.”

“Ah, y, yes!”

Even though she was doubtful but Chiho quickly understood the intention of the two.

There was no more reason to crouch, even though Chiho was covering his mouth, Hitoshi’s cries could still be heard. The bear which heard the cries was running right towards them.

“It’s coming, Emi.”

“I understand.”

Emi understood Maou’s plan and then,

“HAH!”

The two of them suddenly stood up.

At that moment, the stunned bear stopped running.

“Hinako nee-chan, let’s go!”

Chiho had witnessed multiple times, from the sidelines, Maou and Emi’s phenomenal battles and she understood. An opponent at that bear’s level was no match for them.

“Ah, bu, but, the both of them and Alas=Ramus-chan....”

“It’s alright, right now the only one who needs protection is Hinako-nee chan! Calm down!”

“O,okay, I understand.”

Hinako wanted to turn back as she was concerned for Maou and Emi but Chiho pulled her hard and the distance between them and the two people grew further.

Even though the bear did see Chiho and the rest running away, it was wary of Maou and Emi who suddenly appeared and did not move.

“So Japanese bears will get startled too when stared at.”

“It’s not as though it’s impossible for it to run this way.”

When one is facing a bear in the mountains, one should not run away with his back facing it.

Because if that was done, the bear would assume the other party was prey and start attacking.

Usually the bear should not set its sights on someone else other than its current opponent but the bear was attracted here by Hitoshi’s cries in the first place.

If Maou and Emi chose to back down now, Chiho and the other two would be exposed to danger.

“You alright there, Alas=Ramus?”

Maou kept his stare on the bear and patted Alas=Ramus’s hair at the same time.

“Sh~”

Up until now, Alas-Ramus had been obediently covering her mouth.

“Man, you’re calm. You are going to be have one scary future.”

Even at this kind of time, Maou was still able to give a wry smile.

“You’re okay with the bad smell? Is it smelly.”

However, even if she was not afraid, she could probably still smell the odor that was emitting from large wild beast.

Maou and Emi were also quite weak against the beastly stench that the bear has, but,

“Stinky.”

Alas=Ramus honestly said the words above and kept the position of keeping her mouth covered by her hands and leaning her forehead against Maou’s chest.

Maou forced a smile while patting his daughter’s hair and taking a deep breath, he stared at the bear again.

“So, is there a need to do that?”

“The best method seems to be just running away from here.”

At the end of her line of sight, Emi could see Chiho, Hinako and Hitoshi's shilouettes among the shadows of the rice plants.

Just a bit more and they would be at where Kazuma and Ashiya are.

“Demon King, that fella is getting impatient too. So...”

“Got it.”

The bear which was still in the same spot while panting heavily was looking in other directions as it got tired of the two of them staring straight at it.

Not sure if that was a sign for them to escape or if the bear was merely distracted by other things. Emi and Maou kept their guard up in case the bear had any new movements and maintained a minimum level of conversation with each other.

Even though it was something that they both were reluctant to admit, they still lived their lives together and understood each other's ways and habits.

After that, whether it was Maou or Emi, they did not notice anything other than the bear. When they noticed, both their expressions became stern.

At that moment.

“Oh.”

Even though it was not clear if the two’s Ashura-like expression had any use, the bear turned tail and ran.

It seemed to have given up.

After that, they just have to contact the police and the local hunter’s association. At least, in the current situation, this was the best course of action for both the humans and the bear.

That’s right, as long as it was like that.

“Ee?”

“Ehm?”

This sound was suddenly heard.

When they noticed this unknown noise, Maou and Emi’s expressions stiffened. The facial expression this time was useless.

On the road where Maou and the rest walked over from, there was the sound of a vehicle.

The road that seemed to only be there for show was the width of only one car and on that sloppily paved road was a large black recreational vehicle approaching at a rather fast speed.

The bear which left after much difficulty detected the vehicle sound and returned.

“H, hey, what is that? That’s not a car from the Sasaki family.”

In a baffling way, the driver of the black recreational vehicle that was travelling at fast speed on a road that could not be considered wide started sounding its horn after seeing the bear.

“What?!”

“No way?!”

And so one could not blame Maou and Emi for having rigid expressions.

After looking at the driver’s seat of the recreational vehicle, there was no way the driver was able to see the figures of Maou and the rest.

It was still within their expectations if the startled bear attacked Maou and Emi.

But what followed was a horrifying development.

The bear who was frightened by the sound of the engine of the recreational vehicle, stared at Maou and Emi for a while before running in the opposite direction where the car came from, which was where Chiho, Hinako and Hitoshi were headed.

“Crap! Chi-chan and Hinako-san! Run!”

Even though Maou shouted as such, it was obviously too late.

It was just a small distance, once Chiho and the rest slowed down a bit, the bear would get close.

Furthermore, it was hard to increase one’s speed in the rice fields.

Chiho, who noticed that the bear was catching up, was unable to do anything except show a rigid expression.

“Maou-san!”

“Kazuma!”

Both Chiho and Hinako let out a cry, just when they thought it was too late, at the next moment.

“.....Ah, areh?”

Chiho, who was hugging Hinako with her eyes closed, opened her eyes a but when she realised nothing had happened.

They were able to smell the stench of the bear nearby so the danger was not gone yet.

However,

“Fu, uuutsu!!”

Emi was next to Hinako and she was breathing out heavily.

“Wh.....why, is, it like this!!”

Flying long hair and her feet half sunken into the soil.

Emi, who was almost the same size as Chiho, and smaller than Hinako was standing in front of them both and protecting them.

“Yu, Yusa-san?!”

“Ha, eh, ah, um, what’s going on?”

“Hi, Hinako-san, please don’t look!”

[illegible]

The warning was in vain and Hinako's eyes widened as she looked at the impactful scene.

”Growllllllllllllllllll!!”

“You...just back down already!!”

Emi stopped the incoming bear.

“Chiho-chan, leave now!”

“Ah, um, ah, right, Hinako-nee chan, hurry!”

“Ah, ah? Eh? Are, are you alright?! What? What’s going on here?”

“If you can be concerned of what is going on, you can also be quicker!”

No matter how one thought, there was no way they could come up with a reasonable explanation for a city’s office lady to stop an advancing bear.

Chiho anxiously dragged Hinako away from the scene.

“E, Emi! Are you alright?!”

“I’m fine...as if! What am I going to do now?!!”

Emi, who responded once she heard Maou’s voice, used the strength from her waist and lifted the bear’s shoulders and after focusing, in a flash, she knocked the bear back and it landed on its back with its four limbs in the air.

“Guaooo!”

The bear which was knocked back moaned and it used its front limbs to stand up again.

“It.....it’s not enough?!”

The word for “people” [人] was not formed from a bear and a Hero from a foreign world supporting each other.

(T/N: This line was derived from a quote in gag comic Kinpachi sensei [人 人 人 人 人 人 / 人 人 人 人 人 人 人 `] or the word “human” was created from two people supporting each other)

But the result was, Emi was now forming this shape by exerting her strength and wrestling with a bear.

“Mama, go for it!”

“Demon King! Don’t be a moron and just watch! Bring Alas=Ramus to somewhere further away!”

Emi let out a scream.

Even though it was a nerve racking situation, to be cheered on by her daughter while having a sumo match with a bear, whether as a mother or as a woman, she did not know what to do.

However, the Heavens did not let Emi off.

“Hinako! Hitoshi! Are you alright?!”

Emi heard Kazuma's voice coming from below and she entered a state of despair.

“Ka, ka, Kazuma! That, Yusa-san and the bear.....that.....”

Hinako who was in a state of confusion managed to say what she wanted to say after much struggle.

“Eh.”

Ashiya who caught up with Kazuma from behind saw that the water field had become a massive Dohyo (Sumo Ring) and could not help but let out a sound of astonishment

“A, Ashiya-san! Ka, Kazuma-nii chan and...!”

“Ah ha, ha it's like that, that, if Hinako-san and Hitoshi-san are fine then we might as well leave this place.....!”

Ashiya, who was rendered speechless by Emi and the bear having a sumo match, and Chiho tried their best to get the other three to leave the scene.

“Bu, but Yusa-san! Yusa-san is over there!”

However, it was truly difficult to get them away.

Ashiya made use of his large body and tried hard to block Hinako and Kazuma's line of sight. Behind his back, the balance between Emi and the bear's sumo combination had collapsed.

“Kazuma-nii chan! It's alright so just call! The police and the hunter's association! Maou-san will protect Yusa-san! Right, Maou-san!”

“.....Ah, ri, right, like that, Emiiiiii. You alright thereeeeeee!”

“You're distracting me! Shut the hell up! You!”

Chiho shouted next to Kazuma in a shrill voice and managed to overwhelm him. Maou said the above words in a stiff manner in order to play along with Chiho's lies and Emi completely rejected it once she heard it.

Stirring up splashes mixed with mud, trampling on the paddy rice, even though it was like this, the office lady from Tokyo was not pushed back by the bear, more accurately, she had already pushed the bear to the edge of the Dohyo.

At that time, Ashiya and Chiho had already pushed Hinako to the fields that were further away.

“Yu, Yusa-saaaaaannnnn!”

Hearing Hinako's tragic cries, even Emi herself felt hurt to the point of tears.

Fighting a battle with a bear barehanded, there was no longer any kind of excuse to explain it away.

"E, Emi! Kazuma-san and Hinako-san have already left....."

"If you don't have anything important to say then keep your trap shut! Really! Why have things turned out like this!!"

It was apparent that Emi had an upper hand but her eyes were full of tears so she raised her head and started shouting.

At this time, she had no choice but to see eye to eye with the bear.

She scrunched up her forehead as the bear was breathing out unbearably bad smelling breath. That bear seemed to be thinner than what she thought at first.

Grabbing onto Emi's wrist, its paw got smacked down and during this direct contact, it was found out that the bone structure of the bear was thinner than when first observed with the naked eye.

This bear must have been very hungry.

It was probably that the bear was too hungry which was why it came all the way here looking for food.

“.....I’m sorry.”

This bear was worth sympathising.

However, Emi was a human.

Right now in this place, she was living in Japan, in a human society where they work hard for the sake a survival, a single human by the name of Yusa Emi.

She could not ignore eliminating this existence that could harm human society.

Emi far suppressed the bear in terms of reaction speed and she kicked towards the bear’s right leg when it was not paying attention.

The bear lost its support and knelt on the ground.

Emi then used her right fist to shatter the bear’s lower jaw.

The bear shook its head letting out moans.

But Emi's attacks did not end.

She used her arm to hit the bear's chest.

“.....Won't forgive me right?”

In the moment where the bear was attacked by her arm, because of the physical shock, the bear started convulsing.

At the same time, she used her arm to attack, she inserted a portion of her holy magic.

“How persistent.”

The bear was still standing.

Even though it suffered some impact after getting attacked by the Hero from a foreign world, the bear continued standing as though it wanted its life to burn to the end.

“Guaaaaaaaaaaaaa!!”

With a roar to express its will and determination, the bear used all its energy to swing its arm towards Emi.

Emi effortlessly took on the bear's arm and like the movement of flowing water, she used her left hand to hit the bear's left arm.

After making up her resolve, Emi hit the bear's chest in the front.

“Haaaaaaa!!!”

The bear's upper body had lost its balance.

“Woahhhhhh!”

Hearing Maou's gasp of amazement, Emi did a perfect over the shoulder thrown on the bear.

The bear's massive black body drew an arc of water drops across the blue sky.

At the moment its back touched the ground, an explosive sound was made and the impact stirred up a large amount of water and mud.

“Haa.....Haa.....it can't, stand up anymore right.”

Even though it looked like it was still alive, since she did such a throw, logically, its life should have ended.

After Emi made sure that the bear was completely silent, she breathed out deeply and relaxed herself from her nervous state.

And then,

“Yu, Yusa-san?”

Hearing the voice from behind her, Emi’s back straightened immediately and her expression became rigid.

In a flustered manner, she turned her head around and who she saw was Hinako looking behind Emi at the bear that was just defeated and Kazuma who thought no matter what, having a weapon was better and ended up carrying a flimsy looking wooden staff.

“Tha, that...uh...that...that...”

As though she just reacted to what happened after the fight, Emi was sweating up a storm.

“Yu...Yusa-san, just now, the, the bear, that.”

“It, it’s not like that Kazuma-san! This, even though it seemed like something special, that”

“...threw, threw.”

They saw the over the shoulder throw.

From behind the two, Ashiya who was holding a baton and Chiho also walked over.

They both had an apologetic expression as they were unable to stop Kazuma.

Ashiya was holding a baton because he wanted to help Emi with Kazuma.

Then as they were going there, Kazuma clearly saw the bear being thrown to its highest height with his own very two eyes.

“It’s not like that! The bear slipped so I managed to survive unscathed! That, that, Maou! Ashiya! Chiho-chan! Help me say something.”

Emi made a strange standing posture while trying to wipe of the bear’s fur from her sleeve. All this time she was saying the above words, her face as red as a tomato. But even if they did not see the moment where she used an over

the shoulder throw on the bear, anyone who saw Emi covered in bear fur and the fallen bear next to her would think,

Emi defeated the bear.

A thought like that.

Even though Emi, unlike her usual self, was bluntly seeking help from Maou and Ashiya, they were unable to think of a way to convince Kazuma and Chiho decided to set her sights on the sky in a further off direction. Following that,

“Mama is amazing! She finished off the bear!”

It was over once Alas=Ramus said that sentence.

This was the beginning of the “Legend of bear killer Yusa Emi” that was passed down through the generations of Komagane city’s Sasaki family.

Chapter 3: The Demon King and Hero, Stand Together to Protect the Sasaki Family

魔王と勇者、佐々木家を守るために立ち上がる



“Oh, look at this!”

Urushihara repeatedly clicked on his mouse and was happily operating his notebook.

“.....”

“Not mentioning the reports for this area, even if it only occupies a small part of the national newspapers, it should still be published right!”

“.....”

“Ahh, it’s so great that no photos were taken! If it was in the city and someone used their mobile phone to take a few pictures, it’s going to spread in a flash!”

“.....”

In contrast to a very happy Urushihara, was obviously Emi who was hugging her head in the corner of the room.

Uncertain if Urushihara was purely in a good mood or if he was purposely provoking her, Emi could not respond appropriately and only started moaning in a low voice while hugging her head.

The incident that should not happen, that of a bear invading a human village was an incident large enough for the national media to report.

It was something that should rouse up the typical day to day debate about nature conservation or animal conservation. Instead, something else was far too eye catching so no one talked much about the original problem.

“Eh what? [The one who defeated the bear in Komagane city was a woman (23) who came over as a helper for agricultural work. The two meter female bear was killed in one punch after a single yell after confrontation.] This is what the Sports Paper’s news flash said.”

“They’re going overboard! I had to fight that for a while before throwing it!”

Emi finally tried to make a pathetic retort, but, of course, this could not be transmitted to the audience of mass media.

“If it’s said this way, it sounds way more amazing.”

Urushihara laughed after he heard this.

But for such a news report to be taking up the front page, logically, never mind about Maou and the others, Kazuma and Hinako should not have said anything at all.

“Also....[If you should encounter a bear suddenly while climbing the mountain, you should back up slowly while maintaining eye contact. Once you have established your own safety, call the police and the Hunter’s association, readers, do take note] something like that.”

“I did do that! And what do they mean I’m twenty three years old?! Aren’t they supposed to check the details properly before writing such an article?!”

Emi gritted her teeth while talking to Urushihara.

The disturbance that occurred in the afternoon, not just within the town, the entire Nagano prefecture also plunged into the disturbance.

For the entire prefecture, it was not the first time a bear had appeared in a human settlement, however, it was the first time for the area around Komagane city’s Sasaki household. So the autonomous area raised the alert in case there were other bears passing through nearby.

The police and the Hunter’s association which received reports from the Sasaki family obviously would not believe the statement that the bear was settled by a single woman.

But the overwhelming truth was, in that flooded rice field, there was nothing other than wheat, so what was the reason that caused the bear to die in such a place. After thinking, one can only assume that the humans present at the scene did something to resist. Therefore, in the end, the police announced that “the bear was captured by the residents using appropriate methods.”

Since no one was injured and the bear was also dead, just when one can safely conclude the incident of the bear appearing, reporters from the local papers, magazines and sports papers carried their name cards and appeared next to the Sasaki household on the day of the incident.

Even though the facts reported by the police was acknowledged by the masses, somehow, the news that there was a young woman and a man carrying a child leaked out.

And that young woman who defeated the bear, left shortly afterwards without saying anything. Now Emi was sitting in the second story with Urushihara, troubled.

“There’s another cause for this! If that ridiculous car did not do such stupid things, I would not have had to battle that bear! The car was the root of this incident! Why didn’t they write that?!”

Of course, they did inform the police who came over about the mysterious black recreational vehicle which startled the bear.

But as Emi and the rest did not even have the time to remember the license plate number and only remembered the vehicle’s rough design and colour, so the police gave a maddening answer of catching the culprits even though it was hard for them to carry it out.

“That’s incorrect, there’s definitely a Kintaro over there.”

“Who are you calling Kintaro?!”

Emi became furious and she grabbed one of the cushions that were stacked in the corner of the room and flung it in Urushihara’s direction.

“You should stop with the bad habit of throwing things when you’re angry! Seems like it’s true that you tossed that bear.”

Urushihara said unhappily as he severely received the cushion’s blow.

“Isn’t it good? Sasaki, Hinako and the kid are alright, aren’t they?”

“If you stopped using such a teasing tone, I will nod in an honest manner.”

The second cushion, but Urushihara did not move.

”Why is it so noisy?”

Suzuno, who was wearing a bandana on her head, slid open the room’s paper door.

“Hanzo-dono, it’s time to cease teasing Emi-dono. It took Manji-dono a lot of effort to get rid of most of the reporters and in the first place, this is not a topic that is suitable for a long discussion.”

Suzuno only took a brief glance of the situation in the room and immediately understood what Urushihara and Emi were doing.

At the same time, Emi and Urushihara also noticed something.

Suzuno was addressing them by their Japanese names, this meant that there was someone beside her.

“Kazuma-dono, it’s alright now.”

And as expected, Kazuma’s figure appeared behind Suzuno.

“Sorry, can I take up a bit of your time?”

Kazuma spoke as he entered the room and sat in front of Emi.

Suzuno closed the paper door and set in seiza position behind it.

Not knowing what Kazuma could have had in mind, he suddenly bowed in Emi’s direction with a large action.

“I’m really, really, thankful for you protecting Hinako and Hitoshi!”

“Ah, you, you’re welcome.”

“Just in case, we brought Hinako to the hospital. Other than some abrasions, she is completely fine. Thank you very very much!”

“Hinako-san, right. I see. That’s great.”

Right now, half of Emi’s mind was glad that Hinako did not suffer any severe injuries while the other half was worried about what Kazuma might say next.

Following the common sense of this world, logically, a weak human should not be able to throw a bear barehanded.

Kazuma must have thought that as well.

If he realised that Emi had something extraordinary about her, what was she going to do? Just as Emi was troubled about this,

“Speaking of which, Yusa-san, is it really alright for you not to go to the hospital?”

“Eh?”

“You did come into contact with a bear after all.”

“Gu!”

He did not mention the incident of the bear being thrown.

“I, I’m alright. Can I borrow the washroom? I want to change my clothes.”

Emi, who was flustered, answered an answer that did not sound like an answer.

If one had to talk about it, Emi’s greatest damage was that the bear’s stinky stench rubbed off on her.

“I see.....But, if after this, you feel anything unusual about your condition, you must tell me alright? If there’s any way to help, I will help you as much as I can.”

“Y, yes. When that happens.”

Emi nodded, a smile crossing her face.

“See you later then. Yusa-san, you should rest well today. Maou-san and the rest will work hard to do your part. Because today, Yusa-san is the Sasaki-family’s hero.”

After expressing his gratitude once more, Kazuma bowed while holding Emi’s hand and then left.

“Phew, it should be okay if that’s the case.”

Hearing Kazuma going downstairs, Suzuno, who was staring at him the whole time exhaled deeply.

“I heard that the bear that Emilia defeated seemed to be an “old and hungry weakened bear”.”

“Eh? What’s going on?”

Emilia moved her head forward.

It was indeed a hungry bear, but its strength does not seem to be warranted by using words like old to describe it.

“I see. The sources are not consistent, are they?”

Urushihara seemed to have understood the meaning of Suzuno’s words.

“Rather than saying than an OL from the city killed the bear by an over the shoulder throw, it seems more believable to say it as such.”

“So that’s how it is.”

“Ah....”

In conclusion, rather than saying that Emi was stronger than ordinary humans, the bear was already on the verge of death and Emi's struggle to fight back coincidentally worked was a much more understandable and believable explanation.

Even though this explanation, in reality, underestimated the strength of wild animals on the verge of death, if most of the people living on this world believed as such, then this seems to be an accepted fact.

“But, it's definitely good that most people think like this. However, for Kazuma-san and Hinako-san, this unfolded right before their eyes.”

What made Emi uneasy was that what someone says about an incident will be taken as the fact.

People will believe what they see before them and not what was written in an article.

Suzuno showed a complex expression and nodded.

“It's worrying that Kazuma might talk about this to others but I do not think there's a need to alter his memories.”

“But whether it is Kazuma-dono or Hinako-dono, they described the entire thing to me, who has the alias of being “Yusa Emi’s” friend with the details. After this incident with the bear, if they spoke of this to others, they will probably be seen as speaking drunken ramblings.

“Is that so...”

So the matter with Kazuma and Hinako concluded as such and Emi had no intention of further discussion. The bond between them, herself as well as Emi was certain.

“Well, about [bear killer]... this does not seem to be Emilia’s intention but to the Sasaki family, this is quite a supernatural memory.....”

“Wait a moment, Bell, what was that? What about [bear killer]?”

“The impression is sure to be deeply carved.....what?”

Right at the moment when Emi was planning to do some unpleasant things to Kazuma, she heard a nickname that made her uneasy and widened her eyes.

“Ha ha ha, be, bear killer...”

Urushihara laughed hysterically.

Suzuno looked at Emi who was fuming to high heavens and quickly said,

“N, no.....I heard about this from the Demon King and Alsiel and those two seemed really happy talking about it.....”

“Demon—King---!!!!”

Emi’s calm attitude from just now took a sharp u-turn.

As though flames were spouting from her irises, she started roaring at Maou who was not present.

“Wa, wait, calm down a bit and wait Emilia! The Demon King and Alsiel are not at home right now! They went out with Manji-dono just now!”

Looking at Emi who seemed to have the intentions of kicking down the paper door and rushing out, Suzuno stopped her actions in a flustered manner.

“Let go of me, Bell! Where’s Alas=Ramus? She can’t be with the Demon King right?!”

“A, Alas=Ramus is in the room downstairs taking a nap with Hitoshi! Do not worry!”

“How am I supposed to not worry?! What if Alas=Ramus says things like “Mama is a bear killer”?! I can’t face her for the rest of my life!”

“Well, she did see you do that anyway.”

Urushihara expressed his opinion calmly but the crux of the problem was not that.

“Young children are very sensitive to the words that are being used! Once that nickname is used, they will keep using it! The moment the Demon King teaches Alas=Ramus how to say “bear killer” will be the moment his head rolls!”

“What kind of declaration is that?! Please calm down already!”

“Why do you even hate that nickname. In the first place, Emilia is a “demon killer” right? “Bear killer” or things like that are trivial in comparison, right?”

“Of course I will hate it!! Is there any girl in this world who would like to be called a “bear killer”?! Also, I did not kill demons because I like to kill demons!”

Emi, whose young girl’s heart fully bloomed, threw a third cushion towards Urushihara as hard as she could with a face that said she wanted to murder someone.

✖

“Ughh.”

“What is it, Maou-san?”

“Ah, it’s nothing, I just felt a chill.”

“It’s clearly very hot today. Don’t catch a cold.”

In the corner of the work place for bundling, Maou was struck by an unknown chill and he started shivering.

“Here, this is the last box.”

“Alright, thanks for your hard work.”

Maou lifted the last box of saplings and passed them to Manji.

Manji carefully planted the saplings into the soil and then exhaled deeply.

“So what happens after this?”

“It’ll be good if everything goes smoothly. We planted so much so they should be able to produce a fairly good amount of fruits.”

Maou and Ashiya were brought to somewhere different from the place for eggplants and cucumbers.

There were neat rows of ploughed soil that were completely shielded from light under the polyethylene tent. From today onwards, they were going to try growing strawberries.

Even though it was approaching nightfall, the sun’s rays were blocked and the air was moving just like it was before, essentially, the inside of the greenhouse felt like a sauna.

Manji, who was working while dabbing the sweat from his brow, stood up and stretched his back to relieve his back’s stiffness.

“Well, in the early stages, I’ll just leave these for the family to eat. After all, this amount is not enough for selling. If you want to know how long it takes for us to sell them without a hitch, we’ll probably have to wait about three years.”

“Manji-san, the weeds have mostly been removed.”

At this time, Ashiya’s voice was heard from outside the greenhouse.

Ashiya was outside the greenhouse the whole time, weeding the unused fields.

Manji said that if they rolled out the strawberry planting in full force, then they will add on more greenhouses to the field where Ashiya was weeding to ensure a fixed production.

“But, three years is quite a long time.”

“It’s considered to be relatively smooth if we only needed 3 years, but if the situation is bad, it may even drag on to five years. Well, whether it is three years or five years, when that time comes, I don’t think my body can hold up anymore. I really want to hand over all the future tasks to Kazuma and leisurely live the rest of my days.”

Manji laughed in a carefree manner.

Because Chiho’s grandmother Granny Ei was still tough and kicking, everyone seemed to have forgotten that Manji had become a grandfather for a while already and was no longer young.

“But oh well, keep these words between you and me. If Yumiko heard something like this she would scold me with words like “Now in this world, just having a job is something that you should thank the heavens for and yet you, the father of our children, are still complaining, how noisy!” or something like that.”

“Me too, I really want to say those words to Urushihara.”

Ashiya was affected by Manji’s words and started looking in the far off distance without thinking.

“Urushihara-san, for him, he really needs to build up some body strength.”

Manji continued saying while laughing.

Even though Kazuma did not say anything, to an observer on the sidelines, the work completed by Urushihara greatly paled in comparison to what Maou and Ashiya have done.

“Even if that’s the case, it’s good that he’s even willing to work. Now, in this world, there are a lot of people who are capable of working but refuse to work?”

“.....”

If one wanted to say which category Urushihara belonged to, he definitely belonged to the latter. But since he managed to get such praise, there was no need to say anything that will bring down other people’s opinions of him.

“Oh my, even if I make it sound like I’m pretty amazing, but I actually depend on Kazuma and Yumiko completely.”

“Is that so?”

Hearing the other party’s question, Manji nodded his head while giving a wry smile.

“My family originally only planted rice. And we only planted enough vegetables for ourselves to eat. However, after Kazuma entered college to study, he no longer helped out and Yumiko started to expand the production range and somehow I became the representative for the corporation.”

“Eh?”

From Chiho and Riho, they only heard that the corporation structure only started from Manji’s generation, they never thought that behind the entire thing, there was a straightforward woman who was in charge of pushing the entire thing.

“After that, Kazuma also got influenced by his mother and started learning about business and agricultural techniques in a college in Tokyo. And he then met Hinako in college and brought her home to help with expanding the scale of production. Thanks to him, compared to me and my father, that would be Chiho’s grandfather, when he was alive, the annual sales volume now is three times of that in the past.”

Manji held up three fingers with a complex expression on his face.

“It’s amazing to be able to increase the sales volume to three times!”

Even though the McDonald's branch in front of Hatagaya station where Maou worked was labeled as the monster store for increasing the sales volume by more than 100% compared to the previous year to date, it seemed to be insignificant compared to the three fold increase in sales volume.

“It actually isn't anything that amazing.”

Manji gave a troubled smile.

“Thanks to the research labs in the university, we were able to install and use solar panels at a cheap cost when they were supposed to be impossible to use in the fields. At that time, we did not even think that we were actually able to skip the Farming association and have a contract between the restaurants in the city centre to provide them with organic vegetables. Even though it's just chump change, last time we could only throw away and waste those disfigured vegetables, now we can get some money out of them.”

“Ah, I see.”

When the term disfigured vegetables was mentioned in the end, Ashiya nodded his head deeply.

“Last time, how were those things dealt with?”

“Last time, they were usually burnt, buried or tossed away like garbage. Even so, some things can only be left alone and abandoned in the fields.”

Ashiya was unable to forget about the first time he was about to start work, the shock he felt at the moment when Kazuma and Hinako callously threw an eggplant like they were throwing shredded paper. Today, the doubts that he had were finally cleared.

Emi had also said to Maou before, every time, the amount of disfigured, low quality vegetables were more than expected.

So early on, the number of seeds or seedlings planted need to be more and the predicted amount of plants harvested need to be vastly greater than the amount expected to be sent out.

Even if they took into account bad weather or natural disasters such as typhoons, pests and other accidents that may result in losses, in most cases, it was a close cut to just have enough produce that met the minimum standard.

With crops that are overgrown or underdeveloped as the main bulk, the number of crops that do not meet the standard for sale due to various reasons may sometimes be almost equivalent to the total number of crops that can be sent out.

Even the produce that meet the standard of being termed as an A grade crop may be discarded due to things like market trends, national production quantity and various values related to them.

Based on the scale of an individual farming home, the number of low quality crops are often discarded in large quantities of hundreds of kilograms. Even if one felt that “it’s so wasteful”, from the start, this large number was due to unskilful and careless selections.

In the recent few years, the entire nation had started to find ways to efficiently use these discarded vegetables however since it was still in the early stages, the number of discarded vegetables did not decrease greatly because of these schemes.

Before they started out on planting the strawberry saplings, Maou and Ashiya accompanied Manji to the back of the fruit sorting warehouse and they helped to load large quantities of discarded vegetables to the back of a lorry that were headed to a certain university. It should be the same university which supplied the electricity production facilities.

Seems like the research group of that university were carrying out experiments to convert agricultural produce to electricity.

Even though they were aware that the other party are looking at other energy sources aside from fossil fuels and nuclear energy, Maou and Ashiya who were strangers to scientific knowledge could not understand how vegetables like white eggplants, cucumbers, tomatoes, cabbages and lettuce could produce electricity and had even less understanding why someone would even consider using vegetables to produce electricity.

Of course, the university were not specially in charge of recycling waste so they will not collect all the discarded agricultural produce.

Selling them at a cheap price to manufacturers of organic fertilisers, or selling undamaged and edible portions from the discarded products at low prices to welfare facilities; The farmers have thought up various ways to sell to places other than the markets to decrease losses to a minimum.

“For us, the farmers, without doubt, the most important is to let our consumers eat the most delicious food. Even though that’s said, we cannot bear to see the crops grown from all our hard work be discarded by our own hands, so we hope that they can be useful in other ways.”

Manji said while stretching his back once more.

“Sigh, anyway, there still seems to be a lot of work ahead so I don’t think I can retire anytime soon.”

He laughed while saying that and started keeping his tools.

Looking at the other party’s back, Maou and Ashiya let out a sigh.

“Producing food really is not easy at all.”

“Yeah. I get this feeling...”

“Feeling about?”

“I think understand a bit about the reason why the conflicts in the Demon World were unable to end before we conquered it.”

“Demon King-sama?”

Maou’s consciousness flew back to a past not too long ago.

A red Earth connected to a red sky.

The demon world where Maou, Ashiya and others were born was filled with hatred, madness and violence.

The demons who lived in the Demon world, aside from a minority of clans, there was actually no need to feed in order to gain life sustaining energy.

The atmosphere was saturated with demonic magic and that was the fuel for demons to survive. Because the Demon World had endless tragedies that resulted from violence, the demonic magic continuously blanketed the entire Demon World.

“A world that cannot produce food can never become a society.”

To live for the sake of eating.

Hunting wild beasts or fish, planting grass or fruits, and then using these things to exchange for something else, the most primitive human society was started as such.

However, the demonic magic in the Demon World was not produced by someone.

It was an unlimited energy to be taken and used by the demons residing in the Demon World. It was supposed to be like that.

“I understand what you I trying to say but this is definitely not Demon King-sama’s fault. Way before we were even born, the Demon World was already like that. No one has the right to deny your honourable will of wanting to rescue the entire Demon World.”

“Too bad that so called honourable will has such a myopic view and it ended up like this.”

“There is a saying that failure is the mother of success.”

“How relaxing it would be if we can all be so open minded.”

“Hey~It's almost time to go back. It’s starting to get dark. Let’s go back, have dinner and then have a bath!”

At that moment, Manji's voice cut in and Maou and Ashiya glanced at each other.

“Never mind, even if I can't be open minded, I will still get hungry.”

“But, I never thought that even though we came all the way here, we still have to eat Bell's cooking.”

Keeping the complicated emotion that had not had a conclusion at the back of their minds, the two left the polyethylene tent from the back under Manji's urging.

When the three of them reached home, the sun had not dipped below the horizon and from the surrounding, and they could hear the rousing chorus of the summer bugs and frogs.

“Hm? What's up?”

Manji who was driving a multipurpose vehicle saw something up ahead and unconsciously opened his mouth.

In front of the gate was a light weight lorry that did not belong to the Sasaki family.

The lobby's light was on as well so there should be guests.

Going past the lobby, they only saw an old man who had a terse expression. Yumiko walked out of the house and was speaking to him at the lobby.

“Oh, thanks for your care all this while!”

Looking at the old man’s face, Manji lowered his head slightly and bowed.

“Ahhh, Manji-san, you came at the right time. Even though I mentioned it to Yumiko just now.”

The old man who replied had a dark expression on his face and the reason could not be that it was solely due to shadows casted from the lobby’s light.

Noticing Maou and Ashiya’s figures, the old man’s eyes suddenly became sharp.

“Those two are? I don’t think I’ve seen them before.”

“Hm? Ahh. These two are the Maou-san and Ashiya-san I mentioned before who came here to help out all the way from Tokyo. Senichi recommended them. Right, I will introduce this man as well to the both of you. He is our council head, Onda-san.”

“Hello.”

Under Manji's impetus, Maou and Ashiya nodded slightly at the elderly man to show their acknowledgement.

"I see, since they are introduced by Senichi-san, then there should be no problem regarding their background."

"Background?"

In the normal life, this word will only appear when talking about dangerous topics.

Maou and Ashiya showed a surprised expression. What reason could a stranger who met them for the first time have to have his guard up towards them?

Hearing Manji's words, the elderly Onda let down the guard that he had and the deep creases on his brow became even more furrowed.

"Field thieves have appeared in this town. With fruits as their main target, quite a few households have been struck."

In a flash, Manji's expression stiffened.

※

"Oh my, even though it wasn't very discrete, at that moment, I was actually touched. Right Ashiya?"

“Just like you said.”

In Maou’s room on the second floor, Maou, Ashiya, Emi, Alas=Ramus, Chiho, Suzuno and Urushihara, who distanced himself a bit from them, sat in a circle on the tatami.

Facing the usual members of the Demon Fortress who have not gathered together for a long time, Maou and Ashiya expressed their opinions with great emotion.

“When Onda-rojin said “no problem regarding their character”, it made me somewhat feel as though I received some good karma from my life in Japan.”

“That time when we rented the apartment at Villa Rosa, we were directly termed as “Guests with an unknown background.” Just because we had recommendations from Chi-chan’s father, we were trusted in a short time, this is really too much.”

“We are now unable to sleep with our feet facing the Sasaki family.”

“There’s, there’s no need to go to that kind of level!”

Even though Chiho was held with such high regard, she felt troubled instead.

“Anyway, we are going to have to carefully check the general direction of

Chi-chan's house and this place when we're back at Sasazuka. And Emi, why do you keep trying to pull Alas=Ramus away from me?!"

"So that you will not teach her unnecessary things."

"Huh?"

Starting from just now, every time Maou opened his mouth, Emi would reach out and cover Alas=Ramus's ears.

She was afraid that the other party will say terms such as 'Bear killer' but Emi was not silly enough to tell him the reason.

If she did, Maou would surely say it out on purpose for the fun of it.

"Also, since we are talking about this, why not include Eifuku city into the list of places you cannot face your feet towards? I became the guarantor for the both of you before, you haven't forgotten that right?"

"Oh is it, compared to the kindness that Chi-chan's family shown us, that was nothing. Besides, we return what we borrow and we already returned that favor to you much earlier."

"Yu, Yusa-san? What's going on? You said you were Maou-san's guarantor?"

“Ah, Chi, Chiho-chan? No, it not what you’re thinking. That time, these idiots and that NEET over there had their own internal conflict and gave me trouble.”

“Hey, Ashiya, when we get back, check where Emi’s apartment is. Even though it’s just to strive for a small achievement, I must sleep with my feet facing that direction.”

“Sure, but if you do that, aren’t you also facing your feet in Alas=Ramus’s direction?”

“Then towards Emi’s workplace!”

“If that’s the case, then I feel apologetic towards Suzuki-san.”

“That’s enough already isn’t it?”

The meaningless debate with no end was interrupted by Suzuno’s clear and stern voice.

This sentence had no overwhelming presence but it suppressed the entire place. Even Urushihara who was not part of the conversation was affected by it and turned around.

“Now is not the time the discuss about character and what not. Demon King, Alsiel, if you really want to be grateful towards the kindness shown to you by

the Sasaki family then you should start thinking how to handle the crisis before us.”

“Ah, sorry, you are right.”

Maou, who unexpectedly started apologising in an honest manner, crossed his legs and sat properly while showing a serious gaze. He thought of what the elderly Onda said afterwards.

In order to let the different farming families be alerted to the crop thefts that were occurring in the fruit gardens and the vegetable fields, the elderly Onda was busy visiting each household and informing them.

Supposedly, the crops that were stolen seemed to all be fruits, watermelons and tomatoes that can be sold at a high retail price.

“ I remember that the Sasaki family also grows watermelons and tomatoes.”

Ashiya recalled the work he had done until now and said.

“Even though it’s still theft, will someone even bother to steal tomatoes? Compared to fruits, they don’t seem very expensive.”

Urushihara said while typing on his laptop’s keyboard.

“Kazuma-nii chan said before, that seems to be a high quality vegetable with

a brand. Even if they don't go through the farming association, they can also directly supply it to top ranked restaurants. These kinds of vegetables seem to be very popular lately."

"Erm--- giving tomato trees a brand..."

Urushihara tilted his head, not able to understand at that moment.

"Found it, is it this one? It definitely made it onto the news. Even though it wasn't treated as a large issue."

After finding the webpage that had the news, everyone stretched their necks to look towards the laptop.

"They still don't know the exact time of crime. That makes things difficult."

Maou frowned.

"The location is not confirmed either. Besides, every household here has a large field and the distance between two homes would probably take at least ten minutes by foot. They don't even have security cameras either so it's too difficult to pin-point the time of crime."

"However, at the very least, we can limit it to night time."

Suzuno quickly continued after Urushihara's words.

“While I was working in the kitchen, I realised that this place is very different from the city centre. The people who live in same land are very tightly knit. When they realised that a stranger such as myself is around, nevermind about the people who live nearby who suddenly came over to ask, even the postal delivery man kept asking who I was. No matter how desolated this place, considering the risk of being witnessed in the day time, it would make more sense to commit the crime at night. The Sasaki family is the same, after all, members of the farming family would sleep early at night.”

“Then, as long as we patrol at night, it would be fine?”

Towards Chiho’s simple suggestion, Emi had a difficult expression on her face.

“It’s harder to do something like then just saying it. We do not even know the other party’s methods or whether they will even show up in the first place. To spend the whole night patrolling on such a vast land, the amount of strength wasted would be more than usual.”

“For something like this, we’re pushing it after all, huh?”

Maou originally intended to say something like let me and Ashiya handle such a trivial thing but he calmed down after those words left his mouth.

Even if they had nothing else to do, Maou and Ashiya needed to wake up early in the morning as they still had work to do.

As such, the activities they can carry out at night could not be too long no matter what. No matter how one looked at it, the vast field was far too much for two people to patrol.

Even though the thieves seemed to be leaning towards aiming for pricy crops, even if the value was low, if the amount stolen was of large quantities, the loss that would result in the end will still be severe. As such, if they just watched one location while other places were being looted, all their effort will come to naught.

“What’s more important is that we will not be able to stay for long afterwards. Though we do not know what kind of standing the people taking over us will have but even if we are willing to provide security for free, if we request for the people after us to continue staying on guard, we may have to pay them labour fees.

Ashiya said with a gloomy expression on his face.

“It seems like one can apply for insurance with from the farming association with regards to things like this. Of course, the Sasaki family members must have considered this already. Is there no other way? The facts are as such. No matter what, such a problem isn’t something for us outsiders to settle. For starters, various homes are being robbed and it’s serious enough to have caught the attention of the autonomous council, right? Who knows, those criminals might have decided to hold back for all we know.”

Maou, Ashiya, Urushihara, Emi, Suzuno as well as Chiho who was a relative, no matter what kind of shortcut they used to come here, essentially they were just part time workers whom the Sasaki family hired out of good intentions.

Things like we will protect the place, we will guard the place, no matter how one thought about it, it was far beyond the area where a part timer could stick their head in. Ideas thought by outsiders like Maou and the rest, what would Manji, Kazuma and the rest think about them?

And just as what Urushihara said, they were not even sure if the thieves would come at all.

“Even though I do not want to readily accept it, Lucifer’s words do make sense.”

“Ashiya, if you agree with my opinion, can you not add those unnecessary words?”

“Even though I really do want to help the Sasaki family get rid of their insecurities, if we keep fanning on everyone’s uneasiness and then increase our own workload, it will not end well no matter what. We better think of other ways to pay them back.”

“Hey, Emi.”

“Wh, what?”

Maou suddenly called out Emi’s name and it went over Ashiya’s words.

“What do you think.”

“What do I think....”

Hearing Maou ask in a quiet voice, Emi was a bit distressed and she turned to look at Ashiya and Urushihara.

“Honestly, I’m pissed off too but I feel that what Lucifer said is right.”

“Hey...”

Ignoring Urushihara’s protest, Emi continued speaking.

“Regardless of how we think of this, not only do we not have the capability of handling such a situation, we don’t even have the right to interfere. Whether the thieves will show up or not, even if there is no way to guarantee that the possibility is zero, for them to show up on the same day that a warning was given up is fairly unlikely, right, Alas=Ramus?”

Emi was probably lacking in interest as well.

She had the capability but had no plans on doing anything which was basically the same as watching someone die. But at the same time, it was a fact that she could not think of what she could do.

Probably because she expressed this kind of feeling without thinking, Emi looked towards Alas=Ramus who was sitting on her lap without hesitation for affirmation.

“What~?”

Alas=Ramus who got asked obviously was not able to understand and she just raised her head and looked back at her mama with an innocent pair of eyes.

“However, Demon King, you don’t think like that do you?”

However, Suzuno inserted an opposing opinion.

The other people sat in a very casual manner in their own way, only Suzuno alone sat in a seiza position with her back straight and looked right at Maou. Maou’s expression did not change even after hearing what Ashiya and Emi had said.

“You can put it that way. Even though I’m not completely confident.”

Maou nodded, pulled the laptop closer to himself and started scrolling through the pages.

“The only things that can be carried away by hand should only be the cherries.”

“What do you mean?”

“The news reported the following; cherries, grapes, tomatoes, watermelons and pears, other than the cherries, for the other things, even though it is not completely impossible, but to only use your own bare hands to move them would be too cumbersome and heavy and there would be no way to steal enough quantity to make a worthwhile profit. Yet, in reality, a large amount was stolen without anyone actually realizing it. No matter who thinks about it, they would realize that the criminal was using a vehicle. It’s another matter if they are using telekinesis to move the things just like Ashiya in his demon form.”

“Ah, that’s true.”

Urushihara nodded.

“Here it is. The news said, the thefts occurred in the recent week. It’s actually concentrated in such a short time frame. And the amount that was stolen was so large that they cannot be estimated, but at the very least, the stolen goods need to be stored somewhere temporarily. To steal so much produce, no matter what, it cannot be just for their own consumption, so the criminals

shouldn't be locals. But the chance that they actually originated from here is not zero.”

Maou stopped talking for a while and looked at the other members and confirmed that there were no opposing views.

“If they are stealing directly from the fields, there’s no way to neatly arrange the loot into boxes. This entire area has farming families everywhere. If such highly priced produce were to be directly placed on the baggage rack, they are sure to be suspected if they were seen by anyone. So it cannot be a lightweight lorry where the loading bag is exposed. Also, a multipurpose vehicle cannot hold so many watermelons. If a large truck was borrowed, even if they were exposed, they can escape quickly.

“So in the end, what are you trying to say?”

Maou snorted at Emi who had a surprised expression on her face.

“You still can’t understand even though I have said so much? Recently, I saw a vehicle in this area that seemed suitable for stealing vegetables.”

“A vehicle suitable for stealing vegetables?”

Was there really a vehicle that served such dishonorable purposes in this world?

Chiho tilted her head, meanwhile, Emi who was right beside her breathed in the cold air sharply.

“Demon King, don’t tell me it’s that.”

“In this kind of situation, they needed to choose a color that was not eye-catching at night and the design would not raise any suspicion. It also had to be able to carry large amounts of stock and had enough horsepower to allow it to quickly escape at high speed from the side of the fields while carrying all those stock.”

Based on Maou’s deduction, Suzuno pointed the characteristics that the vehicle should have.

“Ah.”

“Could, could it be?”

Chiho and Ashiya finally realized which vehicle matched these qualities as well.

The car which unintentionally resulted in Emi creating a legend, did indeed match the conditions that Maou raised.

“Of course, what I said just now was just a deduction. However, if I was indeed correct, the thieves will come tonight. On the night of the day where

the family and the workers were attacked by a bear, there's no way anyone would have the mood to work in the fields. Tonight, the fields of the Sasaki family are the perfect hunting ground.

“.....”

No one was able to make a retort with regards to Maou's words.

“Chi-chan.”

“Yes, I'm here!”

Chiho who had been listening to everyone's discussion without saying a word until now was startled when her name was suddenly called.

“Kazuma-san and the rest, did they say things like what they plan to do tonight?”

“Not in confirmatory manner, Kazuma-nii chan will be with Hinako-nee chan and Hi-kun. They even said that they will think of strategies to handle the thieves. Oji-san and Oba-san and of course, Ei-oba san did not mention anything about going to the fields tonight.”

“Is it?”

Maou had a surprised expression on his face and he nodded. A slight expression of determination also crossed his face.

“You really want to stand guard and alert the authorities?”

Faced with this determination, Emi asked without hesitation.

“I’m serious about it. I’m sure you have a lot of things you want to say because of what happened in the past. But please keep your mouth shut right now. If everything goes smoothly, then I will listen to all your complaints later.”

“Didn’t I say those things have nothing to do with what’s happening now.”

In the end, Maou was still bothered by the conversation in the eggplant greenhouse. Emi slumped her shoulders in surprise.

“Besides, if you decided to ignore the danger approaching the Sasaki household because of your consideration for me, I’ll be angry instead.”

“What's that supposed to mean?”

Faced with Chiho’s questioning, Emi just shook her head with a complex smile.

Her own opinion had nothing to do with the Sasaki family. If that phrase escaped her lips, Chiho would only become gloomy.

“Then it’s decided.”

Suzuno, who was the only one who understood the issues between the two people, looked at the faces of both Emi and Maou and clapped her hands together, producing a loud and clear sound.

“Starting from now!”

The words that came suddenly, made Chiho, who was originally waiting for the conclusion between Emi’s and Maou’s debate, Ashiya as well as Urushihara raise their head in surprise.

“If we really want to go and stand guard, what should we do, what action should we take actually? If the enemy was really equipped just as how the Demon King had deduced, what time would they aim for to carry out their crime? There isn’t much time till the sun sets completely. The only amount of force we have to stand guard is five people. No matter what, we definitely cannot get Chiho-dono to face those despicable people. And today, the Sasaki family members are definitely not suited to go patrolling.”

“I really got included in the end. Sigh.”

Of course, Urushihara did not want to go out at all and he mumbled to himself without considering the atmosphere.

“You’re asking me what they will aim for? Among all the things that I’ve seen, what seems to be most attractive to the thieves should be the watermelons.”

“Didn’t Maou-san and Ashiya-san say just now that it should be something like strawberries?”

Ashiya shook his head after he heard Chiho’s words.

“There would only be the saplings planted by Manji-san today, of course they would not grow and bear fruit that quickly. I also think that the risk for the watermelons is the highest.”

Ashiya agreed with Maou’s opinion and Urushihara raised an opposing point of view.

“It would seem to be that way if you just look at the price. But watermelons are pretty huge aren’t they? I don’t know how big the van that Maou and the rest of you saw but taking into consideration the amount of effort needed to move them into the vehicle, I still think that they would pick something less cumbersome.”

“True. It seems like one might even weigh as much as two kilograms.”

“When I was younger, I really ate a lot. The sweet ones are really delicious!”

Even though Chiho’s memory can be considered a unique one, there was really no meaning in raising that under the current circumstance.

“Wait, the crops that we have seen may not be all of them right? According to Manji-san, he seems to have grown special things like organic vegetables right? Will those be alright?”

Just like what Emi said, Maou and the rest had not seen all the crops grown by the Sasaki family.

They could not dispute that in a place which they did not know about, there might be other crops waiting to be harvested.

“Speaking of which, Hinako-nee chan did mention something about tomatoes being eaten by masked palm civets. But I’m not sure where the tomato greenhouse is.”

“Hey, Emi, Suzuno, can you both fly around in a circle nearby there to confirm the terrain from the sky?”

“If it’s not the daytime, it’s very hard to see the terrain from the sky. If I happened to be noticed by someone, how do you expect me to explain that away?”

It was difficult just after the conclusion of the bear killing incident. Emi strongly felt that she did not want to cause a ruckus that might increase the Sasaki family's suspicions.

“Well, about that, that's kind of true. But if that's the case then we need a map of this house and the area around it. Urushihara, I remember that there was this very detailed map when I was searching the web, the kind that's like an aerial photo. Could that be used to make a map? If we look at that we would know what's grown in which area.”

“Ha? What are you saying, Maou? That kind of map can't be updated just like that ok? We don't even know when that photo was taken, how can you know what was grown just by using that.”

Urushihara snorted at Maou's suggestion and used his laptop to zoom in on the map.

“And you said detailed. This isn't some kind of spy satellite that you see in the movies, in reality, the resolution is only up to this kind of level.”

What Urushihara was showing was the aerial photo of the area around the Sasaki household. At the most, they could only make out which parts of the mountain were covered with forest and which were not.

“Rather than just dawdling around here, I think finding a Sasaki family member to ask would be the fastest way.”

“Well, that’s true in some sense but how are we supposed to start asking?”

“Just say that the thieves might come and you want to stand guard. The car that we saw before seemed suspicious. If I go to ask, I think I will be more convincing.”

“The problem is, what exactly is wrong with that car?”

“Huh?”

“Just think about it. The other party actually rushed at me and Emi who were about to be attacked by a bear and started crazily sounding the horn and drawing the bear over. If it wasn’t a case that there was something wrong with their brains, then they were actually people with no qualms about harming other people. If Emi and Suzuno were to let out some holy magic to threaten them, who knows, they might send tens or even hundreds of gangsters over to take revenge.

For a Demon King who had no concern about harming humans to actually make this kind of speech, what would the other person feel? Thinking about this point, Maou unconsciously glanced at Emi from the corner of his eye.

“Don’t look at me all the time. I don’t have the intention of retorting that!”

However, his line of sight was completely exposed to Emi.

“Uu! I feel that Maou-san today keeps paying special attention to Yusa-san.”

And then even Chiho started pouting for some strange reason.

“Ha. Since you do not want to the Sasaki family members to get implicated in this then we just have to guard the places we are familiar with? The practical problem is, the five of us can only protect a small area right?”

Suzuno, who was mentally fatigued by the unexpected love triangle, continued to push the conversation forward. But the conclusion made people unmotivated.

“That’s all we can do. At the very least, watermelons would be the main target.”

Because he was unable to think of how to arrange the five people after excluding Chiho on the post suitable patrol route, Maou who was sitting cross legged stared at his knee and mumbled unsatisfactorily.

“So basically, with the watermelon fields as the basis, let’s just think what kind of route the other party will take to drive over and then everyone can try their best to watch the fields without raising any suspicion.”

Just as everyone thought that there was no other choice but to realize on this simplistic method, suddenly –

“Ya, sorry for intruding.”

“Uwah!”

“Kyaa!”

“Eh?! ”

“Guh?! ”

“Ah?”

“Wha...?! ”

“.....Fumyu....”

(T/N: My guess on who made which sound, Maou, Chiho, Emi, Ashiya, Suzuno, Urushihara, Alas=Ramus. In that order.)

With any prior signs or premonition, the sliding paper door at the entrance of the room was pulled opened with vigor letting out a swishing sound.

Hearing this carefree voice, aside from Alas=Ramus who had fallen asleep because she got tired from listening to the adult's conversation, the other people were startled.

Until the sliding door made a sound, not one of them noticed the other person's presence.

“O, O, O, Obaa chan?!”

Chiho was more panicked than anyone in the current situation.

That was right, just as the people from the foreign world were thinking of carrying out the poorly planned security plan, someone with impact barged into the room. That person was Chiho's grandmother Granny Ei.

“Wh, when was she there?”

“I, I completely did not feel her presence at all.”

Especially for the Suzuno and Emi who were considered warriors among the humans, the impact that they felt was a strong one. The line of sight of the two continuously went back and forth between the corridor and Ei who was entering the room.

“Obaa-san is still able to climb the stairs. Ha, let me sit.”

Granny Ei, instead, treated the young people's words like the wind in her ears and lazily sat down at the conference area.

“O, Obaa chan, y, you heard the conversation just now?”

Chiho fearfully and anxiously asked. Ei opened her eyes wide to look at Chiho.

“My ears have yet to require the help of hearing aids.”

“!”

There was a sharp intake of breath from Suzuno and she stood up without hesitation.

“Su, Suzuno-san, please wait!”

“But, Chiho-dono!”

Suzuno was planning to manipulate Ei's memories.

Even though the important sentences that would be too close to the truth for comfort were not mentioned, no one expected Ei to be outside the room and

many words that were not to be heard by Japanese other than Chiho were said.

Furthermore, presently, their situation had become very complex due to Chiho being implicated into the incident at Tokyo, they definitely could not increase the hidden danger.

“You don't have to be that worried, I won't tell anyone else. In the first place, I do not intend to tell anyone else.

“Obaa-chan?”

“Obaa-chan cannot understand such difficult things and I also have no interest in digging into other people's secrets. Also, these old bones cannot hold out in this world any much longer.”

“Ei-dono. No, but”

Seeing Ei's nonchalant smile, Suzuno started stuttering.

“Perhaps all of you may not be ordinary humans but to me, the most important thing is, all of you protected Manji, Yumiko, Kazuma, Hinako and Hitoshi in my place. Simple as that. Here, let me see that.”

“Ah, sure. Here you go.”

No matter who it was directed at, Granny Ei was able to let out an air of peacefulness. Ashiya who was affected, obeyed and placed the notebook in front of Ei.

“Ha. Computers can even do such things. My family’s fields can no longer hide anything.”

Looking at the aerial photo displayed on the screen, Ei let out a sound of awe, impressed.

“Hinako seemed to have said before that you can even see this on the phones now.”

“Ah, y, yes. Just use the map function. It can even be used to navigate and stuff.”

Emi who works at a company related to mobile phones, replied out of reflex while taking out her phone at the same time.

Ei glanced at Emi’s slim phone and then smiled at her.

“How amazing.”

“Y, yeah.”

“The first television in my home was bought when Tokyo was hosting the Olympics. That black and white television was brought back by the late ojii-san with a bullcart. I never thought I will be able to live till the time where a hand phone can be used to give directions.”

“A cart pulled with oxen.”

This fragment of the past of the Sasaki family, Chiho also only heard about it the first time.

“The people in the large cities probably do not know, until fifty or sixty years ago, that’s what we thought was normal. So, even if you tell me that you flew over from the other end of the sky, at the most, I will only think that it is amazing.”

Ei’s simple words did not seem to be a flowery speech. Faced with the ideals an old person had developed over her long life, Suzuno started to lose the initial anxiety that she had.

“Can I have something to write with?”

Ashiya moved again and he took a pen from the luggage case to pass to the elderly woman.

After taking the pen, Ei took out an advertisement flyer belonging to a nearby supermarket from her clothes and started drawing something on the back which was blank.

What she was drawn while referring multiple times to the image on the laptop was without doubt, a map of the Sasaki family's fields.

The map drawn on the white space at the back of the advertisement was so accurate that no one would have imagined that it was drawn free hand. The words on it may look like scribbles but actually they were neat and beautiful handwriting through and through.

“Following the widest road and walking to here, that's the field where all of you encountered the bear. Manji's small lorry is able to travel on many of the roads but there are only a few roads where a large car can pass through. And that would be here, here and somewhere near here.”

“Obaa-san is really amazing.”

Maou studied the map while beside Ei and it was indeed breathtaking.

As long as they had this, the problems that Maou and the rest had to look out for the thieves were solved at once. What is at which place was clear at a glance.

“There's Otama watermelons grown too?”

(T/N: Literally means small jade watermelons. A small breed of watermelons grown in Japan.)

Emi looked over from opposite Maou and her gaze stopped at a place completely different from the place where she was working at.

“Lately the sales for large watermelons in the city’s supermarkets aren’t so good so they are changing them for these small watermelons bit by bit.”

“But these fields where the Otama watermelons are growing do not seem to have any large roads going towards it.”

“It that so? If that’s the case then following the field where we met that bear, the large watermelon field is just a stone’s throw away. Also, there is a cluster of polyethylene greenhouses here. This place seems to be a quite dangerous as well. There’s plenty of small sized vegetables. How about the pears that are a bit further off? If you follow the wider roads, you can get there quite quickly.”

“Those Nashi pears have already past their harvest date so during the beginning of the month, they have all been plucked.”

“So it’s still the watermelon fields we talked about in the beginning. The two sides around the tomato green houses are the most dangerous. No matter what, no one will be dumb enough to steal rice saplings right?”

Aside from rice fields, the other two places can be accessed even while riding an RV sized car. Also, in comparison to the other places, the density of highly priced crops was higher.

Since the places to guard have been narrowed down to two then if they needed fighting forces, they could just let Emi and Suzuno go to each side to handle it.

“Okay. So we just have to wait for the sun to set and we’ll sneak out when the rest go to the bath house. If we encounter anyone, I don’t think they will think it’s unnatural if we say they we are just taking a stroll.

“Wait a minute.”

Maou who was planning to conclude the planning was interrupted by Urushihara.

“What now?”

Maou started frowning unhappily because he got interrupted. However, Urushihara turned a blind eye to it and pointed to one of the places which was on the map drawn by Ei.

“Here.”

“Ha?”

“Here. What do we do about it? It’s dangerous right?”

The place where Urushihara was pointing was some distance away from the tomato greenhouse cluster where they were preparing to patrol.

“You say here, it has nothing to do with the other place right?”

“Why?”

“You are asking why? Well, that’s not a field right?”

“I say, that car that was rushing towards the bear while sounding its horn, where did it come from and where was it going towards?”

“I already said that we left from the house and then followed the road to that field. Over here we met the bear and then we just followed along this road.....Hm?”

As Maou was using his finger to trace the map, he realized what Urushihara was talking about.

“Right in the middle of the tomato greenhouse and that field.....? So in the day, that car passed through here?”

“Should be. There’s no other road along this route to drive out.”

“Which would mean...no, why it is like that?”

“Why not? If it were me, rather than stealing vegetables, there’s something here that’s far more attractive. Compared to fresh vegetables, there are way more consumers who are willing to purchase these. Also, even if you store them for a long time, even in bad weather, it definitely would not rot.”

“.....”

“What? What’s going on?”

Emi still had not comprehended what point Urushihara was trying to make. Faced with her gaze of questioning, Urushihara pointed at the location which met those conditions in a frustrated manner.

“Isn’t this something that was borrowed from the university for early development? I seriously doubt that they were assembled together carefully. If they just took one or two to sell off as unwanted goods, it would be easier to get money from them than stealing a few dozen pieces of vegetables.”

“Wait, please wait a moment! If something were to really happen there.....”

“Ah, in the worst case scenario, all the crops in the polyethylene tents will be destroyed. Even if it wasn’t that bad, a large amount of money would probably need to be spent just to repair the system to its original state.”

After hearing what Urushihara had to say, Chiho’s face turned ashen in a moment.

Maou, Emi, Ashiya, Suzuno were already unable to ignore this point.

That place which was mentioned in Urushihara’s warning was the solar panel installation area which provided the power needs for the Sasaki family’s fields.

“Definitely, as long as you have tools, even some layman can easily dismantle them.”

The group gathered in Maou’s room once more.

At first they decided to sneak out during the time they had to go to the hot springs, but because of Urushihara’s words, they decided to get a ride from Kazuma to go there. On the way back from the hot springs, they asked Kazuma to bring them to the place where the solar panels were installed.

According to the map, that place was very near the large roads. It also did not have much security systems. The entire generator facilities consisting of the

solar panels were just sloppily arranged and installed on support structures above the ground. It did not look very secure at all.

The support frames used to hold the solar panels in place were just simple things made by the assembly of single layers of metal rods.

Even though each piece of panel was about the size of a tatami mat in an apartment, if it was that abovementioned RV car, it can hold all the panels with plenty of space left.

Each support structure had two panels and there were six of them. That means that there were a total of twelve solar panels.

They were connected with the generator at the corner of the field and the generator had wires extending towards the various tents.

“Over here, they are testing how efficient each panel is at producing electricity as well as doing a field test on what changes the external environment would do each battery. My home just happened to have an area that meets the requirements for a medium scale test so in exchange for providing crops that do not meet market requirements at a low price, those were borrowed at almost no cost at all.”

During that time, Kazuma explained to everyone in a rather proud tone.

“But, will thieves bring things like tools?”

The one who answered Chiho's questions was Urushihara.

“In those farms which got robbed, a few families' polyethylene tents were wrecked. I think to these people, if the dismantling process did not go smoothly, as long as the solar panels themselves were not damaged, there's no reason to not use rough tactics.”

“Then, in the end, where are we supposed to go to guard and how do we do it?”

Maou roughly looked through Ei's map once more after hearing Emi's query.

“Probably here and here.”

The places pointed out by Maou were the same as before, the places beside the tomato greenhouses and watermelon fields.

“Because this road is a shortcut to pass through the fields, so there's no way all the cars that pass through belong to thieves. The target route that Urushihara pointed out is very good, the tomatoes may be a target as well. But if we just focus our attentions on the tomatoes and the solar panels, if the other party went for the watermelon fields as well, then it would get troublesome.”

Maou pointed at the map and gave commands to everyone present in a quick manner.

“Chi-chan will just standby at home. In case something happens, rather than us calling the police, it would be better to let Kazuma-san or Manji-san contact the police instead so that it would not cause trouble. If you get our call, no matter what happens, get your family members here.”

※

“...So, why am I in the same group as you.”

The dark black night conquered the entire world and this was in the watermelon fields in the middle of the night.

Suzuno, who was wearing a blue Kimono which was not eye-catching hid among the vines of the watermelon fields, looked unhappily at Maou who was beside her.

“There’s no choice right? Urushihara, who understands machinery better needs to keep watch of the solar panels and it would be better to divide the fighting power between you and Emi. So in the end, you will either be with me or Ashiya.”

“...Honestly speaking, there’s no problem with me being by myself, but...”

In reality, the three demons were originally demons but in their current state, they only have as much ability as a normal human youth.

The only ones who could usually release some supernatural ability were Emi and Suzuno, so in terms of battle ability, just as Suzuno said, Maou's existence would only get in her way.

“I say, Emi is very troubled over the “bear killer” incident, right?”

“And so?”

In the dark night where the shrill cries of insects and frogs can be heard and one could not see their own fingers when their arm was stretched out, Maou replied in a soft voice.

“The other party could consist of who knows how many people. And it has something to do with the thefts that raised a ruckus in the town that happened recently. If they could be successfully caught, let's assume the other party had four men, then you may have an article on the internet written about all of you that says “The heroine that killed the bear continues to serve justice! Displaying her powers against her thieving opponents!”, is that alright?”

Suzuno imagined if the scenario became as what was said and she sank into silence.

“If even that is alright, then I will go to the other side.”

“...No, this is definitely...definitely troubling, but”

As Suzuno was going through a moment of groaning, she finally gave up and sighed.

“I really think it cannot be gotten over with that easily.”

“Huh?”

“Definitely as a woman, even though we are praised as having power that exceeds men, it’s hard to be delighted about it. Even though that is said, in order to avoid that and to make use of your power instead, it’s really hard to get over it. All of you are just waiting here.”

“Those are really demeaning words.”

Maou lowered his volume and showed his amusement.

After that, the conversation ended.

It was not complete silence, on the road which lead to the tomato greenhouses where Emi and the rest were at, even though it was some distance away, they could hear the sounds of vehicles passing through quite often.

The night was decorated by the clear cries of insects and frogs taking uncountable turns to sing.

Only the humans remained silent and continued doing so until about ten minutes have passed.

“...Hey.”

Suzuno let out a call towards the dark night.

“Demon King?”

Maou was far too silent. Could he have fallen asleep?

Given that there was a thin cover of clouds and no moonlight, Maou’s position of lying on his stomach in the middle of the watermelon vines had blended into the dark night so it was hard to tell them apart.

“Hey, Demon King...”

“What?”

“Uwoh?!”

In an unexpected direction, from a place completely opposite from where she called out to, and the voice was from beside her, Suzuno jumped in fright.

“Wh, when did you come over here?!”

“No, look, that place has so many large watermelons, it’s hard to sit. So I wanted to find a more suitable place.”

Since the fields were approaching harvesting time, the watermelon fruits were extremely huge, in order to hide in the fields while not damaging the vines or the fruits, a certain degree of effort had to be exerted.

“Erm-, ah, that was close! There’s somewhere where I can step on.”

“...”

After that, Maou moved around for a while, causing a “koso koso” sound in the darkness, but he did not seem to be able to find a good place.”

“Oi, enough already. If you keep moving around in the dark, it may attract attention.”

“Ah, ahh, that...”

“...Ah, Oi! Ku!!”

At that moment, Suzuno's ears picked up the low sound of an engine.

It was not a road from far away, instead it was the road right in front of their eyes which they were supposed to be monitoring.

Suzuno's actions were very fast and also on reflex.

Grabbing the front of Maou's shirt who was squatting down, she pulled him towards her without hesitation and lowered their bodies.

After Maou was pushed over by Suzuno, he immediately saw the headlights of the approaching car.

“Pehh...”

Even though Maou started groaning because some soil ran into his mouth, he still resisted the urge to make any noise.

In the midst of the suffocating tension, the slight sound of the engine passed by the watermelon field and left just like that with the light emitted from the tail lights following behind.

It seems that it was just a small car belonging to one of the locals.

“Uu--, sorry.”

Maou understood that the reason he got pushed over was because he was slow so while spitting the soil from his mouth, he apologized to Suzuno.

“Even though it was only a small car...I guess we should still send a message to Emi. Phew...Hm?”

Maou wanted to get up from his position after being pushed over. As though he was avoiding resting his weight on the watermelons by accident, he felt around to survey the ground. His left hand parted the vines and came into the ground, his right hand, however, touched something soft that was neither soil, vine, leaves or even watermelons. At that moment, when Maou understood what he was touching and predicted correctly the tragedy that would befall himself after touching that, this was the supposedly reality.

Suzuno’s fist, even in the dark night, accurately hit Maou’s face.

Maou fell backwards without control. Just as he was about to crash into the watermelons behind him, the front of his shirt got grabbed tightly and his collar started stretching on its own.



The king of the dark world, Satan, in this black night, saw the figure of an inquisitor giving out a killing aura that was even more pitch black than the night.

“Go and die, ah, let’s do it that way. I can also contact Emilia, so die now.”

“Wa, Wait a minute, don’t remove your hair pin! It’s too obvious! The light emitted from using magic is far too obvious!”

Maou who felt that Suzuno was serious wanted to run but his chest was held on tightly by Suzuno and pulled upwards and his body was bent in the other direction like a curled prawn, so he could only wave his arms around frantically.

“It’s my fault! Because I don’t know how to read the tension so I was dawdling all the while till just which resulted in this, anyway, it’s all my fault!”

“.....”

“I won’t say things like I couldn’t help it! Because I was concerned that there was soil in my mouth so I was unable to gauge the distance! Afterwards, I will pay you back so don’t chop my head off like a watermelon!”

Even if Suzuno did not use magic, she was also a brawny warrior who could exert unimaginable strength from that petite body.

Although Suzuno's hair pin was her important weapon, even if she did not have it, it should be simple for her to shatter Maou's now fragile human body with a punch.

"You bastard..."

"Ye, yes..."

".....if I didn't take into account of how you usually act, that punch just now would have shattered your jaw."

The inquisitor Crestia Bell said words that, no matter how you looked at it, sounded like lines of a fighter and suddenly released the hand that was grabbing onto Maou's T-shirt.

"Ube-"

Maou, whose back hit the field ground, started gasping as though all the air in his lungs were squeezed out.

"Th...thank you very much."

Facing the inquisitor who was breathing hard like an angry wild beast, the king of demons could only tremble in fear.

Maou had never thought like today, being extremely grateful for passing his day to day life in a morally upright way despite being a Demon King.

Lately, his sworn enemy, the Hero's intent to kill had softened like the feed of goldfish. If he were to die because of the case of sexually harassing his neighbor, he really felt apologetic to his sworn enemy.

“...Speaking of which, Su, Suzuno...that is”

“..... If you dare to say anything unnecessary, I will kill you.”

It seems that Suzuno, whose back was facing him, still had voice which carried a significantly deadly aura.

Maou quickly swallowed the words that were at the edge of his mouth after hearing her warning.

After being pushed down by Suzuno, what his right hand touched when he was about to stand up should be Suzuno's kimono.

However, from how furious Suzuno is, it should not be safe zones like the sleeve, arm, shoulder or back.

But if he insisted on confirming, whether was biologically or based on society, his life would become extinct.

“.....Sigh.”

In the darkness, Suzuno’s sigh was very frightening.

Suzuno was taking deep breaths and finally quashed her messy feelings of anger and embarrassment.

It did not need to be said, she understood that Maou usually would not do any indecent things to women and she was very clear that the incident just now could not be helped.

But logically, he should not have crossed the boundaries that belonged to a woman.

In the dark watermelon fields, Suzuno’s mouth formed a ^ shape and her hand kept touching the part of the kimono in front of her chest.

“... Demon King.”

“Yes!”

Hearing the voice that was restrained, but yet filled with the colors of horror, Maou replied immediately.

“...Because I am considered to be a calm and logical person, your life could extend to this point, do not forget that.”

“I am deeply thankful for your immense generosity.”

Until the end, Maou was prostrating on the ground and kowtowing in a lowly manner behind Suzuno.

“... besides...”

Maou did not hear as he was repeatedly kowtowing on his knees timidly, but Suzuno muttered a hateful monologue.

“If it was Chiho-dono...it should be feel more rewarding right...”

“Wha, what? Even if it was nothing to be satisfied with...”

“What do you mean it’s nothing to be satisfied with?!”

He got another knuckle sandwich.

After that, time just kept passing by,

Even though one or two cars will pass by every hour at the road in front of the field Maou and Suzuno were keeping watch off, they were no signs of the black RV which Maou and Emi had seen.

In order to not let the screen's light give them away, Maou occasionally checked his phone to confirm the situation.

It was twelve at night. As too many things had happened this day, he started to feel sleepy.

Besides, even if nothing happened, the following day, they still had to get up early to work.

“Even though I won't say anything about your situation, if anything happens, I will still hear it from Kazuma and the others.”

The words left by Ei were like a thorn in Maou's heart.

In the end, this night patrol was only carried out willingly by Maou and the rest themselves.

If they stayed awake through the night and nothing happened, they will definitely feel like sleeping the next morning.

“.....Our hopes are dashed huh. Well, if they don't come, that means nothing will happen.”

“Let's contact Emilia and the rest and switch with them?”

Not sure if it was due to Suzuno's increasing urge to sleep, her voice sounded more slurred than before.

“True. Alright, since it's already midnight, we should just switch with them and sleep. Thinking about tomorrow, it's better to sleep a bit.”

“... ..”

“What is it?”

“..... If you take the chance when I'm sleeping to do any suspicious things, I will kill you.”

“Didn't I apologise just now?! I won't do something that would end my life...hm?”

Suzuno was still bothered by what happened just now. Just before an embarrassing and meaningless argument was about to break out.

The sound of an engine drifted over from the direction of the road and Maou and Suzuno nervously lowered themselves.

A deep sound of an engine which sounded powerful.

Even though the speed was not very fast, no matter what, it sounded unnatural.

All the cars that passed through here drove at pretty similar fast speeds as though they were rather familiar with this narrow field road.

In the dark, Maou caught sight of the silhouette of a car that was coming from a distance and he swallowed.

Suzuno was the same.

It was a very unnatural car.

It did not have its headlights on. Instead it was travelling with its fog lights, which at a slightly lower position, on.

The cars body with extremely large. Even though it was hard to tell the exact color of the car in the dark, it might be a dark blue that was almost black. This was definitely a color that was not easy to see in the dark.

“.....Is it that?”

“Even though I’m not sure.....it looks a lot like it. Firstly, what the heck is that attempt to drive quietly.”

“We’ll just observe first.....it’s here.”

The two did not care if the soil will dirty their clothes and they crawled though the field hiding their bodies among the watermelon vines.

The unnaturally large car sluggishly drove on then it stopped among the darkness in front of the watermelon field. However, the engine and the fog lights did not get switched off.

But just judging from that, they were unable to confirm that the other party were the thieves.

“!!”

Maou and Suzuno held their breaths.

The driver was getting out from the car.

As the distance was still quite far, they could not see the features and clothing properly, but they could tell the other party was a man.

Suddenly, a small glow of fire appeared in the darkness and quickly disappeared.

At the same time, the driver seemed to be make a few noises while holding something in his mouth. Probably, he only left the car for a smoke.

A local who just happened to stop by the field simply for a smoke.

Maou who had a bad premonition and carefully stared at the fiery glow of the cigarette that was like a firefly. While still in a crouched position, he used his right hand to touch Suzuno's fingertips.

Maou lifted up his hand and used Suzuno's finger to write something on his own palm.

That was, the number "4".

What Maou was staring at, was not the smoking man but the direction the car was facing.

As well as,

".....!"

In the car, there seemed to be other people.

The “4” was probably meant, including the man who was smoking, there were four people in total.

However, if there was no other movement other than the man who was smoking, then this side had no need to show themselves.

And as the clock ticked on, because the cigarette had burnt out, the light from the fire also vanished.

The man used his shoe to stamp out the flame on the cigarette.

It would be good if he just returned to the car.....

“.....”

“.....Tsu!”

“!!”

However, the situation did not unfold as such.

Maou grabbed onto Suzuno’s slim arm to stop her from rushing out.

Even though the people in the car were not doing anything, the man who had finished his smoke break was going into the fields on his own.

“.....!”

Even though Suzuno tried to show her protest by struggling, Maou did not let go of her hand as though to tell her to calm down.

In the dark, the man who was smoking surveyed the surroundings, as though he wanted to start doing something here.

Perhaps only about ten seconds had passed.

Afterwards, in the arms of the man who stood up once more...

“!”

Was a very large watermelon.

The man was smoking carried that watermelon and walked towards the car.

So he was the thief that resulted in large amounts of loss to the nearby farms.

However in the next moment, an unexpected thing happened.

The man who was smoking went back to his seat and started the engine.

“Eh.”

Next to Maou, Suzuno let out a sound showing her surprise.

She originally thought that a larger quantity that would be stolen.

Of course, the theft of one or the theft of many was still theft but the action that they just saw was not consistent with the prior knowledge that had of the thefts in the nearby farms.

In the night, the car left the watermelon at the same slow speed it came.

“.....Demon King, why did you stop me?”

Because the light of the car could still be seen, Suzuno let out her voice of uneasiness in the same position.

“If you made any noise before the theft happened, they would run away. Also, I felt it was strange. Their target is probably not here. That watermelon should be because it was conveniently here.”

“Conveniently?”

“Ahh, whatever, we should just contact Emi and the other first. Probably, they're the ones.”

After confirming that the vehicle had left, Maou and Suzuno stood up and took out their phones.

“.....Looks like they're really here.”

Emi said those words after cutting the call and Ashiya and Urushihara nodded.

If they came over from the watermelon fields, that would mean that they would pass the solar panels before the greenhouses that housed the tomatoes.

The three of them were waiting next to the tree roots at the bottom of a slope where they could see all the solar panels.

“Then, Emilia, lend me your phone.”

“If you do anything strange to it, I will kill you.”

Even though she said illogical things just like the inquisitor just now, Emi still lent her phone to Urushihara in a straightforward manner.

Urushihara linked Emi's phone to the laptop using a USB cable and then transferred an app onto Emi's phone.

“Ok. After the file is transferred, you just have to install it. If you are uneasy, then just go to the store to remove it.”

“What kind of work do you think I do? Even if you don't say that, I will do it anyway.”

After saying those stern words, Emi lovingly caressed the phone that was returned to her.

“Then, let's confirm the sequence.”

After a short discussion, Emi moved towards the forest that was on top of the slope opposite of the solar power facility. As for Ashiya and Urushihara, they stayed at their original positions.

A few minutes later, a heavy engine sound drew nearer.

Ashiya and Urushihara were at the slope below the road so they could not see the car.

However,

“Seems like it is this.”

Urushihara showed the image on his laptop to Ashiya.

Urushihara’s Skyphone received a call from Emi’s phone. This meant that the car that came over was the problematic one.

Urushihara activated his Skyphone to receive the call.

“Hello, can you hear me?”

“Hi Hi”

“.....It’s that car. I can’t be wrong about it. Below the light, it looks like a dustpan, it has to be the car that scared that bear.”

“Hm, a modified car? Then, what does it look like?”

“Hold on, I’m opening my camera app now.”

The sound of something activating was heard and suddenly a dark projection was seen on the Skyphone screen.

Emi had started the camera on her phone and she was transmitting the images that she took over.

As the street lights did not illuminate area strongly, one could only barely make out a large car and the outline of three people.

In the past, because the Demon Fortress encountered a shopping scam and used some method to gather evidence. No one would have expected that they would use the same method again in this kind of place.

“They seem to be holding something in their hand, this is just nothing but black...”

In the image, they can see the silhouette of three men and they seem to be holding something in their hands.

“.....*Looks like tools to me.*”

Emi’s lowered voice could be heard from Urushihara’s earphones.

“*One person has walked underneath the solar panel...*”

“Good...that’s a good position.”

“The other two people are supporting the panel.....they took it down, I can’t move yet?”

Emi was reporting the situation live. Even though the image of the dismantling in the dark was terrible, Emi’s report of the criminal act still continued.

“Not yet. Wait for them to move that one into the car. If only one is gone, the other five are still able to maintain the electricity supply. Wait for them to move another.”

Urushihara replied Emi as such.

“Ashiya, it’s almost time. They are about to remove the second one.”

“Leave it to me.”

Ashiya softly and surely moved to the slope.

The figures of the three people in the dark moved the first panel to the car and they returned to attempt to remove a new solar panel.

“The second panel, it’s coming.”

In this nerve wrecking moment, the cries of the insects disappeared but that was probably just a hallucination.

Ashiya cracked his knuckles and the moment he positioned himself on the slope in a stance, prepared to run,

“They took it down!”

“Do it now!!”

“Fuuuuuuuuuu!!”

Urushihara confirmed Emi’s signal from the displayed image and Ashiya fiercely dashed up the slope.

Using an unbelievable strength to rush up the slope consisting of soil and grass, Ashiya leapt into the solar panel facility.

After which,

“Nobody move!!”

The roar that was let out from the diaphragm stopped the mountains’ time.

The only light source illuminating the facility was a street light next to the road.

The three men who were illuminated by the white light of the old fluorescent light (because one of them was hiding under the solar panel so Ashiya could not see him), froze as though they were startled by the mysterious tall man who appeared out of nowhere.

“This place is private property and this solar facility is managed by the owner of this land. All of you, whose permission did you get to move these solar panels out?”

Ashiya looked at the men with a look of despise and walked towards them.

Just as such, the other party was shaken. The two reasons why they were not making any noise, aside from being frightened, were likely to be because they were trying to figure out Ashiya’s identity as well as not knowing what to do after that.

In that short span of time, Ashiya had already completely surveyed the slope that the other party was on.

After confirming the rapidly moving shadow on the slope, Ashiya said his next sentence as his next course of action in a dominating tone.

“The person who is hiding under the shadow of the panel, come out now. Also, the rest of you, place your tools next to your feet.”

The men who took a while to understand the meaning of this statement----

“.....”

Wordlessly gripped the objects in their hands and started approaching Ashiya.

Ashiya thought for a while and smirked to himself. What a naïve, superficial and predictable course of action.

The words telling them to put down their tools, made them think about what they were actually holding in their hands.

Those were the tools used to remove the solar panel from the frames as well as the single metal pipes used to support the panel.

In a situation where similarly adult men were in a three versus one fight, Ashiya was empty handed while the men had tools which they could use as weapons.

In that moment, they believed that they were at an advantage and regained their composure.

They believed if they threatened or attacked Ashiya and forced him to retreat, they could think of how to escape later.

If the opponent was not Ashiya, that would be the correct answer.

If the opponent was not Demon General Alsiel in his human form, Ashiya Shiro.

“You.....who do you think you are? Does this have anything to do with you? If you don’t want to get hurt, get lost! Look!”

The man who was supporting the solar panel, waved his metal pole around in an attempt to threaten his opponent.

However, even if he saw the advantage, his voice still had some shakiness to it.

Perhaps he was not skilled in putting up a show. Just to mention, this voice was much weaker than the voice that Ashiya initially imagined.

Ashiya’s face showed a fearless smile and once more, he took another step towards the men.

“Don’t put up any useless resistance, I will not let you escape.”

“Sh, shut up! If yo, if you come any closer, I’ll kill you! Hey, hey, hurry up and run with that! Start the engine, the engine!”

The man with the metal pole was in charge of defense, while the remaining two will attempt to transport the panel away.

“Persistent bastards.”

Ashiya did not stop his steps.

He took large steps which approached the man with the metal pole and the three men started panicking because of that.

“H, hey, it’s not good, run!”

“Idiot! The opponent is only one person! Don’t falter!”

The remaining two people abandoned the solar panel that they took trouble to take down and ran. The distraction the man holding the powerful weapon was trying to carry out became meaningless.

“Uwahhhhhhhhhhh!”

Accompanied by a high pitched yell, the metal pole was swung towards Ashiya to attack him.

Seeing the attack that seemed as though it could cut a watermelon come down at full strength, Ashiya only moved his body slightly to the side and easily evaded the attack.

Waving the metal pole that hit the soil like a child's sword play, the man tried to hit Ashiya. Faced with this all-out attack, Ashiya only used small movements to dodge the attack.

“A struggle right before death.....”

At an unknown number of swings from above, Ashiya decided to stop dodging and slowly shortened the distance between himself and the opponent. He then fiercely caught the hand coming down at him from above with his left hand.

And then,

“Seii!!”

Because of Ashiya's unexpected action, the man's eyes widened and at the same time his center of gravity shifted backwards causing an opening to appear at his jaw area. Ashiya then gave the other party a right hook.

“Ugahh...”

The man who received a punch in the jaw let out a cry and at the same time, his metal pole dropped.

Ashiya released his hand and the man stood up in order to retrieve the metal pole. However, because of the impact he felt on his jaw, his head became shaky and even his vision was unable to focus.

Ashiya swiftly moved behind his opponent and locked the man's arm behind his back and then used his knee to hold down the man's shoulder, restraining the man with the iron pole.

“Now that one man is secured, the rest of them.”

At that moment, the sound of a car's engine echoed through the mountains.

“.....well, they don't want to surrender quietly huh? They're even willing to abandon their comrade in order to escape.”

Ashiya laughed through his nose.

The RV that the men were in stirred up large amounts of dust and made its getaway.

The tail lights wobbly left along the narrow and unevenly paved road. Ashiya sent an “ok” signal to Emi who was standing near the position where the car stopped until now.

When Ashiya turned his head back,

“Heavenly boots!!”

Emi activated her holy magic and started chasing after the car from the air.

“Lucifer!”

“I’m already contacting her!”

Urushihara who started making a phone call replied Ashiya.

“Hello, Sasaki Chiho? The car is heading towards the city streets. The car is a foreign RV car that has been modified. They are moving towards the direction of the bridge that was at the Kappa hall. Yeah, Emilia and Maou and Bell are chasing. The car probably can’t cross the bridge, so just tell the police that. Okay – that’s all. Phew, good job, Ashiya.”

“It was nothing.”

Ashiya looked at the man he was restraining and said,

“Rather than this, give directions properly. Don’t let them escape.”

“Leave that to me. Ah – Bell? The enemy are vigorously escaping towards the Kappa Hall where Maou is. Right, the road towards the city. Okay, good luck then—”

Displayed on the laptop which Urushihara, who was happily dialing his Skyphone, held in his hands a detailed road map that had a slowly moving glowing dot and it was moving with the Tenryuu river as the goal.

※

“Wha, what was that?! What happened just now, damn it! Hey! What are we going to do about Mishill?! Are we just gonna dump him like that?!”

In the dusky mountain path, a young man driving the RV with a pale face used a frightened tone to criticize his companion who was riding with him.

“There, there was no choice! I never thought that there would be anyone there and stuff.....”

“Sh, should we run, what do we do?”

“You say run, I don’t even know what we are supposed to do!”

“Calm down! Since the situation had become like this, the police should not be here that fast! Drive faster, and then we can lose the car in a suitable place and then run! Besides, this car belongs to Mishill right?!”

The three companions of the man called Mishill who was caught by Ashiya, ran away from their crimes in terror and tried to look for a thread of hope which was why they were madly driving along the dark road.

There were very little street lights and there were no cars and pedestrians along the road. The car was ignoring all traffic signals on this road with no signs and driving along at extremely high speed in this desperate escape.

“But, but what about the solar panels. It took, took quite a lot of trouble to steal them.....”

“Is it time to say these kinds of things, you idiot! Throw them away with the car!”

“Ah, damn it.....it was so easy at first, what the hell was that, damn it!”

“We stayed here for too long. It was only easy because this place was too rural. But because it’s like this, they started going on alert! If only we escaped once we were done with those things earlier!”

“Now it’s pointless to say that! Whatever, we’ll decide once we get on the highway! The license plate number should not be seen yet! We’ll just escape as far as we can!”

The man who was driving, held onto his anxiety and forcefully pressed on the accelerator.

The car that was running amok outside Komagane city's field roads at a dangerous speed finally made it to the Tenryuu river that was in between the base of the mountain which could be seen in the darkness.

“Just a bit more, just a bit more, at this time, it would only take about five minutes to reach the highway.....”

The moment the driver saw the street lights of the city and foolishly let his hopes escape his lips, a sharp cry came from the front passenger seat.

“In, in front, in front!!!!”

“Eh.....? Uwahhhh!!!”

What was happening, at this time, on this road, exactly what was happening!!

In a single second, the driver started roaring such complaints in his head and then stepped on the accelerator as hard as he could and was prepared to take on the impending impact.

“Gwah!!!!”

“Kyaaa!!”

“Hiiii!!!!”

In a flash, a force that they did not imagine was from this world came towards the car.

The driver and passenger’s seats air bag inflated at once and the three men continuously let screams of distress out of their mouths.

After the horizontal slide that happened at the same time as the impact and the dangerous spinning around, the car finally came to a stop.

The three people kept hugging their heads and did not move.

“H, Hey...what was th, cough”

The man who was sitting at the back seat started looking around while coughing due to his lungs being squashed by the seat belt.

“.....nkle.”

“Eh?”

“Twi, twinkling...probably.”

“Twi, twinkling.....eh, a Ta, tanuki or something.....”

“No.....it, it’s a person.....”

The driver raised his head but as he was still compressed by the air bag, he maintained the position of bracing for impact and replied in a shaky voice.

“Per, person?!”

“I’m not sure, it was only a moment, bu, but”

“Wh, why is there a...wom, woman wearing a kimono at this time.....she can see this way but still stood in the middle of the road.....”

“Wha....what, that, a ghost? Don’t joke around.”

The car that slid across horizontally now blocked the entire road and its headlights were now shining on the forest located beside the road that had absolutely nothing in it. Even if the light barely illuminated the area, it scattered in an uncomfortable way due to the hidden darkness.

“Bu, but that could not have been a ghost right? The air bags activated which meant that there was definitely something there.”

“Stop stop stop!! What do you mean someone is twinkling! Ha?! That’s nonsense! How can there be someone walking around this area at this time, it’s impossible! We’re leaving!”

The moment the man grabbed the steering wheel and stepped on the accelerator.

“Hm?!”

The steering wheel was unexpectedly light.

It was just like the front wheels were not on the ground. Strangely enough, the accelerator also became weird. The wheels were spinning non-stop and the car vibrated with a clacking sound, however it did not move forward at all.

“Damn it! Did we run on top of some boulders at the side of the road?! Oi, Oi Tez! Get out of the car and check!”

“Eh, ehh, no way!!”

The voice of the driver started become flustered and he started yelling angrily at the man in the back seat.

“Just get out already! If this goes on, everyone will get caught!”

“U, uu...please don't leave me here alright?”

The man who was addressed as Tez had a look that made it seem like he was about to cry but he still obediently followed the orders and left the car.

A human was twinkling, if that was true, then there was a possibility that the car stopped moving because it ran over a corpse.

With that terror in mind, the door was opened and all he saw was the terrifying mountain road as well as the tire tracks that resulting from the skidding.

And then, after surveying the area over and over,

“Wh, what do you mean a person, there's nothing at all.”

The place where the kimono-clad woman was supposed to be did not even have a scarecrow.

Perhaps they mistook a small animal or a sign for a person. Just as Tez was about to get away from the fear he felt and looked at the front side of the car, as some horrible image that could not have happened based on common sense unfolded in front of his eyes, his entire body shuddered.

“.....Eh.....”

His brain refused to comprehend what was happening before him.

“What is this. The two people in the front seats did not see this?”

The man in the driver’s seat has said, a twinkling kimono-clad woman.

Then, what is that.

Taking on the impact head on of the RV car that can carry up to ten people, and even to lift up its front wheels after it stopped. What in the world was this kimono-clad woman?

“Hey....Eh, ah.”

“Mmm--?!”

Tez could not help but let out a sound, was it because she heard that sound? The woman wearing a kimono turned her head.

“The next one, is it you?”

The face that got illuminated by the headlights and a wolf like smile came out of the dark as though the prey had been spotted.

At this moment, the man at the driver's seat floored the accelerator once more and the woman lost her balance immediately,

“Haaaaaaa!!!”

The woman let out a sharp shout and at the same time she lifted up one leg and used to the same leg to stomp down hard.

How much power did this one stomp have? The pavement below her shattered and the woman stabilised herself onto the ground like a metal pillar.

“Don't think you can get awayyyyyyy!!”

And just like that, a car that should weigh at least a tonne was slowly being lifted off the ground.

“You over there, you can't be thinking of escaping?!”

The woman who was lifting the car until it was in a completely inclined position used a chilling gaze to stare at Tex and because he was too terrified, he lost consciousness and collapsed on the spot.

“WhawhawhawhawhaaWHATTTTTTTT?!”

“HIEEEEEEEEEEEEEEE?!”

The two men in the driver's and front passenger's seat had fallen into pure utter terror.

After Tez left the car, the field of vision of the windscreen started to move upward.

The headlights were shining above the top of the grove so without doubt, the car was at an incline.

The steering wheel had lost control and no matter how the accelerator was stepped on, the car would not move.

“What’s going on hereeeee!!”

“He, helpppppppppp!!”

At the same time the two men let out their respective yells as they could not understand what was lifting the car, driven by fear, they tried to abandon the car to escape.

However, their terrifying experience did not end there.

At the moment the car stopped rising, something seemed to have landed on top of the car.

“Now whatttttt?!”

The man in the driver’s seat looked above his head and started to cry.

“Oi, Oi, look.....the sun, sun roof is”

The man at the driver’s seat was speechless after looking at the sun roof which the man at the front passenger’s seat was also looking at.

Something tough was using an extremely strong power was continuously striking the car’s roof.

“Yi, eh, ah.....”

As though it was swept by a machine gun, the sun roof collapsed and in the middle of the two men who were still unable to make any noise,

“Kyaa?!”

A sharp blade pierced through the sun roof like an icicle and separated the driver’s and front passenger’s seat.

The two men saw their teary and snotty foolish faces reflected on the mirror like blade.

The blade in between the two men which sliced open the gear stick and pierced past the seats was withdraw slowly back into the darkness.

However, the horror did not conclude there.

The hole created by the mysterious sword had something else sticking in.

““~~~~~!!!!””

The two could not even scream already.

That was a hand.

A human's right hand which was enveloped by a golden flame.

The outside had an impossible sound that sounded like something being torn off and at the same time, a flame enveloped left hand entered the car as well.

The two hands with flames, as though they want to slice open the top, started peeling apart the sun roof from the top of the car.

Without the sun roof, looking towards the open car roof that let them completely see the night sky, there stood a woman who was engulfed in a golden flame with a head of pale silver hair the same colour as the moon.

“Do you think you can run away.....?”

The low voice of the woman that was full of the intent to kill sounded like the voice of an Oni from Hell.

“The payback for exposing a human to danger, receive it properly.”

In the darkness, the woman took the fractured car roof, tore it off from the car and tossed it aside.

The same time it hit the pavement and let out a clear loud sound,

“.....Ah, Ah.....Ahhhhhhhhh”

The man in the front passenger’s seat, Hiro, seemed to have crossed his limits for terror.

He sat on the chair and lost control of his bladder.

“U, Uwah.”

“Eh, wai...”

However, the man at the driver's seat who had also reached the limit of his tolerance for horror regained his composure at this time.

Even though the fiery woman on the roof also noticed in a panicked manner at the same time,

“Ku, Dam, damn it!!”

He kicked open the door at the driver's seat, jumped onto the ground and ran away without even turning back.

“Arara.....Hmph, you still have the energy to run.”

The woman who easily tore the roof off prepared to give chase and she stepped into the darkness.

“I won't you run, enemy of the farm. The crime of taking away the crystallization of labor and the crime of putting Chiho-chan, Hinako-san and Hitoshi-kun in danger, I definitely will make you pay back.”

“.....Emilia, enough, get down now.”

“Ah, sorry, is it very heavy?”

“Piece of cake. Anyway, we need to restrain that person over there first.”

As she heard the sound below the car, the woman also regained her composure.

The kimono-clad woman who lifted up the car was, of course, Suzuno. While the one who bare handedly ripped the car roof off was Emi, or more accurately, Emilia, who was flying in the air while enveloped by her Evil Repelling armor.

“Where's the Demon King?”

“Ahhh, he’s waiting at a place not to far from here. Lucifer had already told Chiho to inform the authorities. We’ll wait for Demon King to finish things at his end then we’ll transport these crooks over.”

“Sure. Ah, wait a bit, I need to get my phone back.”

Emilia flew down from the top of the car and went to the back of the car.

While Ahiya was facing off with the first man, she went near the car and put her own handphone in.

As she had installed the GPS tracking system that was linked to Urushihara’s laptop before hand, it was possible to use the same tracking system that Maou and Urushihara used when Emila was captured by Sarii.

Thanks to that, Urushihara was able to tell Maou and Suzuno the correct direction where the car was going.

“It’s done already--”

“Alright.”

After Emilia took her phone back, Suzuno released her hand from the car.

The car that fell on the ground, due to the impact and its own weight, the front wheels burst, the headlights also shattered and it looked very tragic.

“However, was it really that scary. No matter what, their reactions were too exaggerated.”

“.....It must be, extremely terrifying. Even though it’s a bit.....you know, to say that about myself.”

Emilia and Suzuno shrugged and laughed bitterly as their backs faced the beaten up car and the two thieves who were scared stiff.

“Ha....Haaa....Haaa”

The man at the driver's seat, even though the impact on his foot due to jumping from the car resulted in pain extreme enough to make him cry, he still ran on the road as though his life depended on it,

At this moment, even if it was just him, he still had to escape. Because events that exceeded common understanding kept happening, he was unable to make any calm decisions.

In the midst of running, he looked back a few times. The woman who was covered in golden flames did not seem to be after him.

Even so, the driver did not stop his footsteps. He could not stop his footsteps.

The fear of that unknown sword flying out of somewhere, slicing through the darkness if he stopped was the only motivation for him to keep his feet moving.

It was already late into the night, on this road which could only have a few traces shown by borrowing illumination from the street lights and lights from the farming homes, he continued escaping single mindedly while tears and snot ran down his face.

The incline of the road in the darkness become more and more gradual, and up ahead, he could see the Tenryuu river.

However, he would not be able to enter the highway on foot and there were also not much places to hide.

“Damn it...why did we encounter that kind of thing.....”

In the midst of expressing his frustrations, he stopped in order to readjust his breathing.

It was indeed karma for his own evil ways but he did not have the heart to understand this point, also, he definitely did not know that these unusual and strange incidents were what he deserved.

At this time, the man raised his head as he heard something like sirens from a distance.

The ambulance? Or did police contacted by the man who captured Mishill finally arrive?

The man who still thought about running raised a face that looked like he was on the brink of death,

“.....Uu?”

At the entrance of the bridge that spans across the Tenryuu river was the figure of a person.

Considering the events until now, anyone who treated the other party as a person who happened to be someone who lived nearby who wanted to cross the bridge can be considered a moron.

If one wanted to ask why, someone who happened to live nearby would not be standing in the middle of the road like a Kongorishiki.

(T/N: Kongorishiki: One of the two guardians that are commonly placed at the entrance of Japanese Buddhist temples.)

The figure had already looked in this direction.

The figure maintained a steady pace and walked forward, it seemed like it did not have a greatly different size compared to the man.

However,

“What bad luck.....that’s what you’re thinking right?”

In the darkness, what was heard was the voice of a young man.

“Don’t be mistaken. All of you are definitely idiots. Because you’re idiots, so you will step on the tiger’s tail which should not be stepped on.”

However, the moment he heard that voice, the man felt a violent chill down his spine and quickly found it difficult to breathe.

If he ran with all his strength, he should still be able to make it but he felt like he was in agony.

The same agonizing feeling as though an unseen hand was tightly gripping onto his throat.

“Evil cannot be categorized as honorable or despicable. However, all of you are different from us after all. We preyed on others for the sake of survival. All of you.....completely did not have any considerations. You did not have any considerations and then plundered and harmed other people. So you, even at this point of time, will not think about why you encountered these kinds of events.”

What he saw in this agony was probably an illusion. The approaching shadow seemed to be getting bigger continuously.

The shadow seemed to have become some ominous thing that was darker than the night and started to expand.

“All of you are sure to be only thinking about escape so you don’t even have an inkling of considering your evil ways right? I felt it, your, corrupted and negative emotions from the depths of your heart.”

“.....Yieahh.....”

In the middle of struggling to breathe, the man saw it.

The figure was illuminated by the light from the street lights.

The head, had horns.

The legs, could not have belonged to a human. It did not even resemble the feet of wild beasts that were imaginable in this world.

The size, was even taller than the man who captured Mishill.

He was just like the Oni which appeared just now.

The driver shook from head to toe and he stared at the Oni from below.

“Someone who does not even have the resolve to see Hell is unable to become a purely evil person. The price of hurting other people has to come from yourselves and to be paid back with your entire life.”

The Oni who was missing one horn grabbed the head of the man who could not utter a word.

Grabbing the man who had goosebumps all over and could not even move a finger, the Oni raised the weakening man up high and then,

“.....Just like all of us.”

Before hearing that sentence, the man had already lost consciousness and all his strength slipped away in the Oni’s hands.

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“Kazuma-nii chan, they’re alright so please calm down.”

Chiho who was sitting in the front passenger’s seat of Kazuma’s car which was speeding through the night, tried to calm Kazuma down.

“No, but, I never thought Maou-san would do this kind of thing...if something bad happened...”

“I already said it’s fine. It would be even more terrible if something happened to us instead.”

“Chiho is correct, Kazuma, we should not be anxious.”

“Uu.....”

Since Chiho got a phone call in the middle of the night, the thieves of the farm should have been caught.

Kazuma who was in disbelief at first received a phone call from the police later on and the one who urged Kazuma to go was none other than his grandmother, Ei, who was now sitting in the back seat.

“But, why is Obaa chan here as well! It’s dangerous isn’t it?!”

“Precisely because it’s not dangerous anymore which is why I’m here. I always felt that it’s quite cold at the base of the mountains. The incidents over there should have ended, so let’s go over to the bridge first then.”

When Chiho turned around to look at her grandmother, at the same time, she felt that it was really unbelievable.

As though she felt Chiho’s gaze, Ei smiled and said the following.

“Last time, occasionally such people would appear. I merely saw such people before, that’s all. Now, it’s very safe and very convenient, so this is no longer the era that requires people which such amazing abilities.”

What was that supposed to be answering.

In the darkness of trying to understand,

“Ah!”

After passing the Tenryuu bridge, Kazuma spotted many police sirens in front of his eyes.

Chiho, Kazuma and Ei got out from the car and at that time, among the unexpectedly large crowd of onlookers, they saw five people.

Looking in the direction that had been cordoned off by yellow tape, what could have happened to result in that kind a situation? There was an enormous RV car with a sun roof that was peeled off and burst front tires.

Following that, four young men were not riding in the police cars but instead, in ambulances. The five people who were observing this scene, shrugged their shoulders and prepared to leave the scene so they turned around, afterwhich----

““““““Ah””””””

Met eyes with Chiho, Kazuma and Ei.

Kazuma probably had not grasped the situation.

As for Chiho, she only had to contact the police upon the request of Maou and the rest when they discovered the thieves.

Why did Maou and the rest gather at the scene of accident of the thieves' car?

From the time Chiho was awoken and to the time she arrived here, it was not more than twenty minutes.

If they were at the Sasaki family farm, there was no way to reach this place by foot within twenty minutes.

Maou, Ashiya and Urushihara.

Emi and Suzuno looked at each other with a sour look on their faces.

“Maou-san, Yusa-san, Ashiya-san, Urushihara-san, Suzuno-san.”

At this moment, Chiho walked towards them with a smile on her face.

“Thank you very much.”

And then she bowed.

Ei, who was looking at this scene, said to Kazuma.

“Hey, Kazuma.”

“Ah, ahhh”

Those people are the ones who protected Hinako, Hitoshi and all of us, Chiho’s important friends. That’s the more important thing you should concern yourself with.”

In the country known as Japan, the words of a grandmother who lived through the turbulent times, simply put, were strong enough to calm Kazuma’s wavering heart.

“Chiho’s, friends huh.....”

“Yup.”

“.....Is that so, that’s how it is.”

Kazuma nodded with a wry smile.

“If that’s the case.”

“Hm?”

“Tomorrow morning, it’s better if they work as per usual.”

Kazuma shrugged and he looked at the five amazing city dwellers standing next to Chiho.

“That’s right.”

Regarding Kazuma’s words, Emi smiled and nodded her head in a satisfied manner.

Epilogue

“Alright, so I just have to sign here? Got it.....thanks for your hard work. Ah, just leave them at the corridor first, we will distribute them ourselves.

Ashiya thanked the delivery man and then gave a troubled smile as he looked at the heap of cardboard boxes at the corridor.

The quantity of items sent to Tokyo’s Sasazuka’s wooden apartment Sasazuka Villa Rosa seemed to be enough for them to open a grocery store.

“This is really an amazing quantity, it’s probably even more than the udon that Suzuno sent over when she moved here?”

Maou walked out of the room and his eyes widened when he saw the mountain of cardboard boxes.

“Yes yes, it’s definitely more.”

The other recipient of the items said while showing a troubled smile just like Ashiya.

The sender was Sasaki Kazuma who resided at Nagano’s Komagane City.

Inside the boxes were without doubt, the harvested crops from the Sasaki family home.

Opening each box one by one to confirm, there were actually four watermelons, each with a 2 litre capacity, that were harvested from the watermelon field where Maou and Suzuno hid in. One for each person.

The others included eggplants which Maou and the rest helped to harvest, cucumbers, tomatoes which they did not see at that time, pumpkins, lettuce and cabbages. The other party sent over an amount such that they can choose not to go to the supermarket to buy vegetables for a month with no problem.

Of course, these were out of kindness from the Sasaki family and they also received their pay from the work while they were there.

“This will really help us a lot. Not only did we get income from working, we also received so many things. This will ease our home’s financial burden. It’s great that we accepted the Sasaki family’s work.”

Ashiya was so touched that he started choking up.

“Don’t focus on being too happy, Alsiel. How are we supposed to fit all these things into the fridge?”

Suzuno raised the practical question a step ahead.

“Let’s have watermelon for all three meals tomorrow. Then distribute some to the nearby people? If we don’t do this, quite a lot might spoil right?”

Maou said with a wry smile.

“Oi, there’s a letter in this box.”

Urushihara, who was opening the other boxes, held an extremely thick envelope in his hand.

After opening it, they found several photographs, a letter written by Kazuma and for some unknown reason, a folded supermarket advertisement was found inside as well.

The four people looked at each other. They unfolded the flyer and as expected, it was filled with Ei’s handwriting.

Both sides expressed their thanks for accepting the job and a report on the recent situation as well as what happened after the incident with the thieves and concluded that the group must come back again next summer.

Those four men were initially arrested for attempting to steal the Sasaki family’s crops but after investigation, they were confirmed to be the culprits behind the serial thefts of crops which caused a ruckus within Komagane City and were then arrested and sent to the investigations bureau.

What was surprising was that these four came from normal middle class families and were university students who lived within the city.

Including the Sasaki household, nearby farming households suffered a loss of up to millions of yen. The criminals sold the crops at low price to black-hearted retailers and online buyers and received about a few hundred thousand yen which were spent for their pleasure.

There were several cases all over the country of agricultural produce being stolen directly from the farms but as the scale was quite terrible and the university where the criminals studied in was a nationally famous and known university, it became news which stirred up the nation.

In these news, there were also questions they could not be explained at the scene where the men were arrested,

The four men were gathered at one place and they were all in a state of disorientation.

Seeing an Oni, a woman enveloped by flame, testimonies that had unclear meanings.

But as no one knew the truth, the criminal's statements and what they saw were all treated as nonsensical words and not a soul believed them.

Kazuma and Ei did not mention at all what they felt about these unusual incidents and they do not plan to.

Replacing that, the both of them----

“Since all of you are Chiho’s friends, you are welcome to come over even if it’s just to visit.”

The above was written.

Just based on this point, this was the best praise for Maou and the rest working hard.

“Urushihara, next time we go, you have to wake up early.”

“Ehh? I don’t want to. Just Maou, Ashiya and Bell going would be fine.”

“If we leave you here by yourself, Alsiel will not accept it.”

“Just as Bell said. We must pay attention from now on about our relationship with the Sasaki clan. When we go there the next time, all the troops of the Demon Fortress will advance together.

“Aren't there only three people in these troops?! Also, Maou and Ashiya, how long do you both plan to stay in Japan?! What happened to conquering the world?!”

Ashiya and Urushihara started a long and meaningless argument again.

Maou who observed the two arguing with an uncaring look, took out his phone to call Chiho.

“Hello, Chi-chan? Are you free to talk now? Ah, actually, we received the vegetables from Komagane, yeah, I thought it might be better to just inform Chi-chan’s mother and father. Ah, your mother is there too? She wants to use the phone? Ah, this is Maou. Thanks for taking care of us this time...yeah. I just received them from Kazuma-san. Hm?”

Looking to the side, he waved at Suzuno and gestured that he wanted to pass the phone to her.

“Suzuno happened to be here, I’ll pass the phone over to her. Hey, Chi-chan’s mother is looking for you.”

“Thank you...This is Kamazuki. Greetings, I really bothered you greatly this time round.”

Suzuno held Maou’s phone at her ear and thanked Riho who was on the other side of the phone.

Maou looked at Suzuno while leisurely thinking about how to return to favor to Suzuno, Chiho as well as Emi later on.

※

“Want Hi, Hi’s photo!”

Before going to work, letting Alas=Ramus take a look at Hitoshi's photo was probably a mistake.

Emi thought this way as she held Komagane's Sasaki family's letter in her hand which was found in the items she received before leaving her house.

Alas=Ramus who had to stay within a certain distance with Emi, returns to a merged mode with Emi when she was at work, and was currently existing within her.

But when she was awake, she tended to speak to Emi in her head.

Seeing the photo of the first friend of a close age she made in Japan, Sasaki Hitoshi's photo, of course Alas=Ramus would feel happy.

“Ok, ok , ok, I'll get another one developed, Mama needs to work afterwards, so you must be a bit quiet.”

“You promise?”

“I promise. Pinky swear.”

“Pinky sw~~ear!”

Emi smiled at Alas=Ramus who was unusually serious while looking at the photo in her hand.

On the morning when they were going to return to Tokyo, in front of the entrance to the house of the Sasaki family in Komagane, the Sasaki family, together with Emi, Alas-Ramus, Chiho, Suzuno, Maou and the rest as well as Riho who came over to pick Maou's group had a photo taken.

The Demon King in the photo, had the appearance of the normal cheerful youth, Maou Sadao.

But Emi definitely felt it at that time.

Even though it was just a but, Maou had returned to his original demon form.

Ashiya fought in his human form and she also did not immediately feel Maou's demonic magic so the source of demonic magic should not be big. However, how was Maou able to transform in a place that did not have large amounts of negative emotion.

After discussing with Suzuno for a bit, even though it was a bit hard to believe, they made a probable conclusion that the Kappa hall might have been a source of demonic magic.

Even though the building had the exterior appearance of a cute kappa, but there were rather official research facilities with folk tales as a base being displayed, as well as artifacts with a significant history.

Even though they were eroded and swallowed by the tides of history, but the people who lived on this land gathered from ancient times fear towards this water youkai, the “Kappa” and fear can be turned into magic, this was the only possibility.

Afterwards, Emi heard from Chiho that Maou was very interested in things about the Kappa.

Lately, she has been too careless and relaxed about issues revolving around the Demon Fortress, but she confirmed once more that they were horrifying demons and the possibility that they can recover their original power existed within Japan.

Even so, as long as they returned to the environment of Sasazuka, there was no need to raise her caution to a level more than usual. Emi started to think about how to finish consuming the entire box of vegetables that she saw before she went out.

“The expression after the end of your holiday is quite a downer.”

In the changing room of their work place, Suzuki Rika who was both Emi’s colleague and friend poked Emi’s face while saying this.

“Good morning Rika. Yeah, just feeling down because I have this extravagant trouble. A lot of vegetables been delivered to my house just now.”

“Vegetables? Sent by your relatives?”

“Yeah, something like that. Even though they’re not relatives but someone I met in Nagano...”

“Ah, now that you mention it, you went to Nagano.”

Even though working at the Sasaki household was something that was not planned for, there was no need to specially hide the issue that she was going to Nagano, so she told Rika earlier on.

“Right. Ah, here’s a souvenir for you.”

“Oh, thank you thank you.....”Thunderbird Bun”, it looks strong.”

“I think so as well.”

“Ah, right! Speaking of Nagano, Emi, do you know this incident?”

Rika clapped her hands as though she thought of something, took out her mobile phone from her locker and turned the screen towards Emi.

The headlines news reported by an online news site was a report about the farm thieves from earlier.

“...Ahh, the incident about vegetable thieves being caught? It’s on the local news there as well.”

Unable to say that it was herself who ripped the car roof off the thieves’ car, Emi only nodded her head politely but Rika shook her head.

“No no. A bit lower. Is this real? Didn’t the news at that place report this as well?”

“Eh...”

Emi listened to Rika words and looked down the display of the news website.

“?!”

And almost fainted.

“Th, this is...”

“Yeah, really shocking right! This person looks kind of like Emi but there’s no way Emi would go and do farming work so it should be someone else. But she really looks like you from the back right?”

When exactly and where exactly was this taken.

Even though there was a bit of distance away, it could not be wrong, that was Emi standing at the scene after the bear was defeated and the police came to investigate.

She was wearing clothes suitable for agricultural work which was different from what she usually wore and her face was not in the photo as well.

But in the depths of the photo, somewhere out of focus was without doubt, Maou who was carrying Alas=Ramus and facing the camera.

If Rika managed to recognize Maou and Alas=Ramus's faces, Emi decided to abandon all feelings of gratitude and manipulate Rika's memories.

““A woman from a farming family is able to fight a bear bare-handedly?!”, stuff like that. The sports news also wrote this. If it was as per normal, I would just laugh it off as a joke but because I feel that this photo really looked like Emi so I saved it.

“Be, be, bear, right, I also noticed that this became news.”

“Hm? Emi, what's wrong?”

“Not, nothing at all. Alright, time to start work, work.”

Emi carried a stiff smile on her face and urged Rika to leave the changing room.

“Ah, ex, excuse me, I need to use the washroom for a while.”

“I, I understand, Emi, are you alright?”

“I’m fine, I’m fine. I seem to have ate too much for breakfast...ahhaha.”

Emi rushed into the toilet, letting Rika who was tilting her head in confusion wait outside, and she took deep breaths roughly in front of the mirror.

“Mama, alright?”

Alas=Ramus who seemed to be still awake asked in her mind in a worried manner.

“I’m al, I’m alright. It’s not as though I got exposed, I was just shaken, there’s no proof that that’s me anyway.”

The mirror reflected Emi’s own face covered in cold sweat. Rather than answering Alas=Ramus, it sounded more like she was saying those words to herself.

However, Alas=Ramus seemed to be still worried and she said this kind of statement.

“Mama, is bear killer?”

“.....who told you that?”

“Papa did.”

“.....is that so?”

Emi’s ashen face from before changed and what descended was a dark shadow of fury that was even more dusky than the pitch-black night.

“...Alas=Ramus, tonight, let’s go to Papa’s house.”

“Papa! Tonight, tonight!!”

“And...what exactly did Papa say to Alas=Ramus and Hitoshi, I need to carefully and thoroughly confirm it. Hehehehehe...”



The laughter from Emi that sounded like it came from the depths of the abyss continued for a while, causing Rika who was waiting in front of the washroom to shiver.

“E, Emi? Are you alright? Tha, that is, sorry? You don’t seem to be in a good mood?”

Rika who could not help but take a peek into the washroom, timidly asked Emi who was letting out a scary laughter in front of the sinks.

“EH? Ah, sorry, nothing happened. Thanks to Rika, I know a great thing.”

“Eh? Is, is that so?”

“Today, after work, I’m just happened to be going to a place. So I’m a bit happy, thanks to that, I’m full of motivation to work.


“I, I see? Although I’m not very sure, but as long as you are happy.”

“Yes yes.”

Emi nodded with a broad smile on her face.

“I will be extreme—ly happy.”

This night, just like the night before the battle at Ente Isla, the Hero and Demon King's (one sided) overture to an epic fight unfolded, of course, this would be a story for another day.



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アニメ本編 & 特典小説楽しんで頂けていますでしょうか？ 通常の文庫と比べると挿
絵点数は少ない構成なのですが、いつもと違って私の方で印象に残ったシーンの挿絵箇
所をいくつかチョイスさせて頂きそこからさらに担当氏からGOサインが出た部分を描
かせてもらってます！ ここを読んで下さっているのは物語を最後までお読み下さった
方だと思つので熊VS恵美のシーンも印象に残っていると思うんですが、カバー裏SDで再現し
ておりますのでそちらもぜひ見てやってください！

自分の描いたキャラクターに動きや声が吹き込まれる感動は言葉にできない程嬉しい
ですし、ここにコメントを残していること、こうして魔王さまという作品に携われたこ
とも本当に嬉しいです。

和ヶ原先生、制作の皆様、キャスト陣の方々、原作に携わるすべての編集様、作品を応
援して下さい読者様 & 視聴者様の応援あってこそなのでそのありがたさを忘れ
ずに働くことなく作品を盛り上げていけるように頑張りたいと思います。これからも、
「はたらく魔王さま！」を宜しくお願いします！

Credits

Hataraku Maou-sama! Vol 5.5

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